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ESPRIT DE MARINE CORPS: THE MAKING OF THE MODERN MARINE CORPS
THROUGH PUBLIC RELATIONS, 1898-1945

by

Colin M. Colbourn

A Dissertation
Submitted to the Graduate School,
the College of Arts and Sciences
and the School of Humanities
at The University of Southern Mississippi
in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements
for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy

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ABSTRACT

Between the Spanish-American War and World War II, the United States Marine Corps institutionalized the use of public relations and publicity to craft an elite military identity and to endear the Corps to the American public. The Marine Corps adapted this approach in the wake of threats to its existence and as the service benefited from the power of a sensationalist press in the early twentieth century. Fundamental to the Corps' public relations strategy from 1898 to 1945 was the employment of community-level public relations through the use of "human interest" stories, a practice that brought the stories of Marines to their hometowns. That the Marine Corps focused much of its publicity on the experiences of individual Marines from the turn of the twentieth century through World War II is often overlooked.

During the interwar period, Major General Commandant John A. Lejeune served to legitimize the Marine Corps' position in the military establishment and in front of the American public. Lejeune applied progressive principles of education, professionalization, and public relations in order to assure that the Marine Corps survived the post-World War I downturn in funding. Lejeune also helped to establish Marine Corps alumni groups like the Marine Corps Association and created lasting traditions such as the birthday celebration, which helped to ensure that even when Marines left the service, they still had an important role in supporting the Corps. Lejeune's eight-year tenure as commandant established lasting policies and the interwar commandants who succeeded Lejeune secured his legacy through reinforcing and even expanding his reforms.

Many historians argue that the Marine Corps' survival and public endearment in the twentieth century was rooted in its military actions in World War I and World War II. However, it was the early institutionalization of the Corps' public relations efforts that provided consistent community-level support for the Corps during and between these wars. From the "follow-up" book in Chicago in 1907 to "Joe Blow" stories in World War II, the Marine Corps demonstrated a clear understanding of the need to bring the stories of Marines to their hometowns in order to effectively establish a lasting public image.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This idea for this dissertation began in 2006 when I was a college intern with the Marine Corps History Division in Quantico, Virginia. Walking onto Marine Corps Base, Quantico was a shock for a kid from the Midwest that had no experience with the military. That the Marine Corps was special seemed obvious; an afterthought. I did not know it then, but that was the start of my career as a military historian. I then spent the next twelve years researching why the Marine Corps seemed so special. Throughout those past twelve years, my work has been influenced by many colleagues, mentors, family, friends, and even institutions. I am truly indebted to everyone who played even the smallest of roles in helping me develop this work. Throughout this process, I have had the great fortune to travel all over the world, including to many of the battlefields that appear in this dissertation. I have written portions of this dissertation in eight different countries and spent many hours writing at 30,000 feet.

Few words can properly express my appreciation for the love and intellectual support provided over these years from my wife, Rachel. Once I started working full-time and left the safety of the university environment, the road toward the completion of this dissertation became much longer. Every day, Rachel has provided tremendous support and sacrificed our time together, whether I wrote zero words or 3,000. Any writer can appreciate the looming weight of deadlines and the long days and lonely nights in front of books and the computer. Without Rachel's understanding, love, and support, I never could have finished this project. This dissertation is as much a testament to her dedication to me finishing, as it is to my own. Rachel's support, along with my remarkably large and loving family have been essential to my mental and intellectual health throughout this

process. My mother and step-father, Luanne and Steve Peterson, my father, Charles Colbourn, and my siblings, Hannah, Bryan, Jeff, and Brian have all had to hear about my work for years and always continued to support my endeavors. My best friends, Nick Hussong, Peter Corey, and Matt Biddle are more like brothers than friends. For their support, I am forever grateful.

Much of the research for this dissertation was completed with the funding and support of several institutions and individuals. Throughout my tenure at the University of Southern Mississippi, I received several travel grants to conduct research at the National Archives and the Marine Corps History Division and Archives. In 2012, I received the General Lemuel C. Shepherd Dissertation Fellowship from the U.S. Marine Corps Heritage Foundation, which helped to fund several research trips to the Washington, D.C. area from Mississippi. In 2012, I also received a scholarship at USM, funded by C. Paul Hilliard, called the “World War II in the Pacific Fellowship.” With this fellowship, I was able to travel to Guam, Saipan, Tinian, and Iwo Jima and had the honor to meet and interview World War II veterans who told me first-hand the importance of “Joe Blow” stories to their families back home.

I have been researching and developing ideas and hypotheses about the Marine Corps’ public relations program since I first entered USM. As such, I have had a tremendous amount of guidance and mentorship from the absolutely top notch military (and non-military) history faculty there. My advisor (and former landlord) Dr. Andrew Wiest, provided not only a cabin for me to rent while I was at USM, but also expert guidance and insight as I developed my dissertation. Dr. Wiest has an uncanny ability to get straight to heart of the big picture issues, and for that help, I am truly grateful. Dr.

Andrew Haley has for many years had to suffer through my knocks on the door to his office to bounce ideas around and get his expert advice on the socio-cultural side of the dissertation. Dr. Kyle Zelner has had to leave the colonial era in order to help with my twentieth century dissertation. Dr. Zelner is an amazing writer and has truly helped me raise the bar for writing over the years. Dr. David Davies brought his expertise in Journalism and Mass Communication to this dissertation and has always been a supportive mentor throughout this process. Dr. Heather Stur has provided critical mentorship over the years and has brought several big-picture themes to this dissertation that I knew might exist, but needed an extra push to bring to the page. Mentorship from my Masters and undergraduate advisors, Dr. Michael Neiberg and Dr. Kenneth Swope respectively, was also important in developing this dissertation. That I had Dr. Swope as a professor and mentor at both Ball State University and Southern Mississippi was particularly beneficial.

In 2006, I approached my history professor at Ball State, Dr. David Ulbrich, to ask about how I could get more involved with military history. Dave suggested that I apply to an internship at the Marine Corps History Division and helped me make that a reality. Since then, Dave has been a close friend and extremely supportive mentor. Dave has always celebrated my accomplishments and has provided the type of intellectual and professional support that a historian needs to get ahead in this competitive environment. I am not ashamed to say that much of my success is derived from Dave's support and willingness to get into the weeds with my work and with colleagues in the profession. I could not have asked for a better friend and mentor for these past twelve years.

There are many colleagues and historians whose guidance and friendship have made this dissertation possible. At Southern Miss, Michael Doidge, Dr. Jason Engle, Ryan Tickle, and Marty Morgan have all been great friends and colleagues and have provided valuable advice and discussions throughout my graduate career. Marine Corps Historians Drs. Heather Venable, Mark Folse, and Earl Catagnus have likewise helped with research problems and presented alongside myself at conferences as we all endeavor to decipher the Corps' history. At the Marine Corps History Division and Archives, Annette Amerman, has been my intern boss, mentor, and close friend throughout the years. Annette is easily one of the most knowledgeable historians of the Marine Corps and has been and will always be my first contact when I need to get past all the legends, myths, and lore to get the facts of the Corps' history. USMC History Division Historians Drs. Nicholas Schlosser, Paul Westermeyer, Chuck Melson, and Charles Neimeyer have all also provided stimulating discussion and advice on Marine Corps history topics throughout my internships and beyond.

During my time at the History Division, two former Marine colonels also played a significant role in the development of my writing skills. Colonel (Ret) Dick Camp was the Deputy Director of the History Division and pushed me to write articles in *Leatherneck Magazine*, even going as far as giving me some of his choice topics. His friendship and mentorship in the years since has been indispensable in my development as a historian and writer. At *Leatherneck*, editor Colonel (Ret) Walt Ford also helped me turn my undeveloped writing skills into something that readers might find interesting. Col. Ford also arranged my visit to Vietnam to get more experience in a former war zone and also experience interviewing veterans. My trip to Vietnam was tremendously helpful

to my career and I gained friends for life. For that I am ever thankful of Col. Ford's contribution.

When I left Southern Miss to start a full-time ORISE Fellowship at the Defense POW/MIA Accounting Agency in 2013, I had the great honor of joining what I considered to be an elite group of historians within the lab at DPAA. Historians Drs. Jim Rose, Michael Dolski, Eric Klinek, Aelwen Wetherby, Robert Shafer, Julian Saltman, Derek Mallet, and Jeff Johnson as well as Becky Dutton all provided insightful advice and discussions on history topics related to this dissertation. At DPAA, I also relied on the advice and friendship of Drs. Derek Benedix, Bill Belcher, and Carrie Brown, all Anthropologists or Archaeologists who provided different perspectives and intellectual support throughout my time in Omaha.

At the end of my DPAA fellowship, I was fortunate enough to join the publishing team at the *West Point History of Warfare*, working with Rowan Technology and the professors at the West Point History Department. I would like to thank Vincent Viola, Tony Manganiello, and Tim Strabbing for the opportunity to work in Manhattan with a great team of designers and tech experts. West Point Professors Drs. Clifford Rogers, Colonel Ty Seidule, and Steve Waddell all provided intellectual discussion and advice throughout my tenure with Rowan and I am grateful to have been a small part of such an amazing book project.

The most significant writing for this dissertation has occurred over the last two years, during which time I have been the Lead Historian with the BentProp Project and Project Recover. When I came on board, my colleagues all communicated to me the importance of finishing the dissertation and the degree and that they would support me in

any way possible. I did not realize then truly how much support that meant. Dr. Pat Scannon, the founder of the BentProp Project, has given me space to write since I first started with Project Recover. Even when we were finishing up coconuts and reef fish after a day of hiking the jungles of Micronesia, Dr. Scannon made sure I would be working on my dissertation that night. Dr. Mark Moline at the University of Delaware has always made sure that I had office space or interlibrary loan capabilities available when I needed them, and has always been interested in academic discussions over a game of golf. Dr. Eric Terrill at the University of San Diego, California's Scripps Institution of Oceanography, made sure that I had access to UCSD's entire library system and academic databases. Without those databases, I could not have included some of the most recent scholarship in this dissertation, and for that I am incredibly grateful. Having a team of PhDs and scholars around me at Project Recover, including my colleague Dr. Drew Pietruszka, our Lead Archaeologist, has reinforced to me the importance of completing the dissertation. Without their advice, mentorship, and friendship, this project would not be what it is. The team at the BentProp Project, including Dr. Scannon, Dan O'Brien, Flip Colmer, Val Thal Slocum, and Derek Abbey has also provided much discussion and intellectual support. Education is one of BentProp's founding principles and they have certainly fulfilled that mission through my work.

DEDICATION

For Sergeant Richard G. “Tiny” Sowell, U.S. Army.

Killed the night of July 6-7, 1944 at Saipan and declared Missing In Action (MIA).

For 73 years, Sgt. Sowell’s remains were known only as Unknown X-29.

Accounted for June 30, 2017.

May you rest easy back home on American soil.

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INTRODUCTION

From 1898 through the Second World War, the U.S. Marine Corps actively developed a public image that helped to sustain its existence. Through the creation of that public image, the Corps also defined what it meant to be a Marine to both potential recruits and the American public. The creation of the Marine Corps image was unprecedented in its effectiveness in defining the Corps as an elite military service and establishing its importance to Americans through the dedicated effort at educating the public about its history and mission. While the Marine Corps image is often viewed within the vacuum of its tremendous public exposure during the Second World War, the Corps' groundbreaking public relations activities throughout the entire first half of the twentieth century paved the way for the strategies it employed during the Second World War, which eventually gained the Corps its mythic status.

The expressed purpose and audience of the Corps' public image changed throughout the period covered by this dissertation. Prior to the First World War, the Corps sought to teach the American public about the Marine Corps through publishing its history. This was both an attempt to prove its worthiness in the military establishment, as well as to fight against the narrative from naval officials that argued Marines were worthless aboard the ships of the fleet. In the First World War, the Marine Corps crafted its public image specifically to highlight the "eliteness" of the service, first to make sure Marines went to Europe, and during the war the elite image helped the Marines gain recruits and helped the perception of the Marines to outperform their impact on the ground. During the interwar period, General John A. Lejeune specifically aimed the crafting of the Corps' public image toward legitimization and professionalization through

education and doctrinal reform. Since the Corps was severely drawn down at the time, there was not as much of a need for recruit-focused publicity. During the Second World War, the Corps again turned toward recruits, but also employed public relations tactics that endeared the public to the Corps' activities and Marines.

This dissertation begins with the Corps' experience in the Spanish-American War, both on the ground and in the newspapers back in the U.S. In response to the public attention the U.S. Marine Corps received while participating in police actions and interventions in the Caribbean, as well as the Spanish-American War, the Marine Corps began to develop a public image or brand identity. This process started with individual recruiters and recruiting stations in the first decade of the twentieth century and was institutionalized with the creation of the Marine Corps Publicity Bureau in 1911. At that time, the Marine Corps as an institution took an active role in the creation of its public image, and the American public's reception to the Corps' outreach aides in an analysis of the changing nature of American culture as well as the civil-military relationship in the United States. While developments such as the adoption of amphibious assault doctrine in the interwar period helped to focus the Corps' combat mission, its public image was created by and flourished through the Corps' attention to its relationship with the public throughout the first half of the twentieth century. The Marine Corps enlisted a different approach to its public relations than the other services, thus setting itself apart. While the navy and war departments generally utilized publicity only for recruitment during wartime, the Marine Corps institutionalized its relationship with the public to sustain its existence during war and peace. Between and during the two World Wars, the Corps

developed relationships with local and hometown newspapers across America through the creation and distribution of hometown human-interest pieces.

The Marine Corps consistently employed this “hometown” approach for nearly half a century, as they transitioned from broad-based human-interest news to “Joe Blow” stories during the Second World War. This approach connected the Marine Corps to the American public in a different and more substantial way than the other services. By 1945, the “Joe Blow” stories found a dedicated audience in individual Marines’ hometowns, thus helping the Marine Corps’ part in the war become synonymous with the enlisted soldier’s experience in war.

The current historiography of USMC public relations gives little attention to the importance of the Corps’ strategic creation of a public image and its ongoing relationship with the public. This dissertation will place the Marine Corps in the broader history of public relations, analyzing the importance of previous public relations precedents upon the development of the modern Marine Corps.¹ The hayday of the American advertising movement took place during the Progressive Era in the United States. Historian D.L. LeMahieu argues that by the end of World War I, the advertising and publicity industry had “rung up over a billion dollars in annual sales,” and “permeate[d] the fabric of American culture.”² Among the most significant developments in the public relations and advertising field during this period was the rise and success of the “agency.” Modern

¹ For histories of Public Relations as well as the relationship between PR and the government, see Scott M. Cutlip, *Public Relations History: From the 17th to the 20th Century* (Hillsdale, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, Publishers, 1995); Stuart Ewen, *PR!: A Social History of Spin* (New York: Basic Books, 1996); Stephen Ponder, *Managing the Press: The Origins of the Media Presidency, 1897-1933* (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1999); and Leonard Ray Teel, *The Public Press, 1900-1945: The History of American Journalism* (Westport, CT: Praeger Publishers, 2006).

² D.L. LeMahieu, “The Origins of the Advertising Business,” review of *The Making of Modern Advertising*, by Daniel Pope. *Reviews in American History* (December 1983):571.

advertising agencies provided expertise, such as copywriting for advertisements, as well as visuals and even local relationships with newspapers and editors. In many ways, the Marine Corps also developed “mini-advertising agencies” within its recruiting centers as early as 1907, far before the other services recognized the power of public image management. The Corps also utilized and prized what is most commonly known as the “hometown” in the world of journalism. Whether it took the form of a “follow-up book” of Joe Blow stories, the Corps’ consistent connection to the hometowns of Marines represented an important public relations strategy.

Analyzing the American people’s perception of the Marine Corps brings a war and society perspective to a subject dominated by studies of military doctrine. Military historians most often concentrate on the Marine Corps’ tactical separation from the other services, including the development of amphibious warfare and other distinctly Marine Corps roles and missions. This dissertation argues that the development of effective public relations ensured the Marine Corps’ success more than military doctrine alone and even predated the Corps’ major doctrinal developments. Prior research on the development of Marine Corps public relations among historians is limited. The recent historiographical debates regarding the development of a “modern” Marine Corps, however, make this research both timely and revisionist. While there are numerous converging arguments regarding the creation of a “modern” Marine Corps, this dissertation connects many of the periodizations and incorporates a social analysis of Marine Corps’ public relations efforts into the Corps’ broader development.³

³ These historiographical perspectives on the making of the modern Marine Corps include, Alan A. Axelrod, *Miracle at Belleau Wood: The Birth of the Modern U.S. Marine Corps* (New York: Global Pequot Books, 2007); Aaron O’Connell, *Underdogs: The Making of the Modern Marine Corps* (Cambridge:

Initial scholarship on the Marine Corps' public relations program during this period is limited. This first study was Robert A. Lindsay's *This High Name*, which, written in 1956, represents a valuable research tool, yet lacks an effective analysis of the significance of public relations.⁴ Examination of the Corps' public image has seen a resurgence since Robert Lindsay's original study. This historiography includes Craig Cameron's *American Samurai*, Robert S. Burrell's *The Ghosts of Iwo Jima*, Aaron O'Connell's *Underdogs*, David Ulbrich's *Preparing for Victory*, and Heather Marshall's "It Means Something to be a Marine These Days: Image, Identity, and Mission in the Marine Corps, 1861-1918."⁵ While Robert Lindsay established the basic narrative of the Corps' public relations program, the other studies begin to place the Marine Corps in a broader context, providing examinations of gender, culture, and policy.

In her dissertation, historian Heather Marshall argues that the Corps' development of a public image occurred from the Civil War and was finally achieved at the outset of World War I. Marshall also focused on how the American public, and particularly future recruits of the Marine Corps received and interpreted the message the Corps delivered. While this dissertation and Dr. Marshall's dissertation agree on the importance of the early twentieth century, particularly the development of the Marine Corps Publicity

Harvard University Press, 2012), Jack Shulimson, *The Marine Corps' Search for an Mission, 1880- 1898* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1993); David J. Ulbrich, *Preparing for Victory: Thomas Holcomb and the Making of the Modern Marine Corps, 1936-1943* (Annapolis: Naval Institute Press, 2011); and Heather Pace Marshall, "It Means Something to be a Marine These Days: Image, Identity, and Mission in the Marine Corps, 1861-1918," (PhD Dissertation, Duke University, 2010).

⁴ Robert Lindsay, *This High Name: Public Relations and the U.S. Marine Corps* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1956).

⁵ Craig Cameron, *American Samurai: Myth, Imagination, and the Conduct of Battle in the First Marine Division, 1941-1951* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994); Robert S. Burrell, *The Ghosts of Iwo Jima* (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 2006); Aaron O'Connell, *Underdogs: The Making of the Modern Marine Corps* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2012).

Bureau, this dissertation will seek to lay out the strategies and approaches the Corps took in order to craft and develop the public image and how that fit into both military and public relations history. This dissertation also includes both the interwar period as well as World War II. The periodization is important to the thesis because while the public image of the Corps that emerged from the First World War was indeed full of legend and lore still embraced today, the interwar period could easily have broken the Corps' momentum without the leadership of Major General John A. Lejeune and his successors. The importance of the Corps' activities in the Second World War also cannot be understated, particularly in light of the consistencies between the public image management strategies of both wars.

This dissertation closely examines how the program defined the Corps' relationship with the American public: most importantly, how the Corps' public relations strategies were institutionalized, legitimized, and optimized. Placing the Marine Corps' relationship with society into context allows historians to better understand the public's fierce support of the Marine Corps, especially when the Corps' existence was threatened during the "unification crisis" at the outset of the Second World War.

Many of the Marines who participated in the public relations programs and actions also play a major role in the historiography.⁶ Benis Frank's *Denig's Demons and How They Grew* is the most informative history of the development of the Combat Correspondents system. Frank, a former Marine and close friend of General Denig, wrote

⁶ See Samuel Stavisky, *Marine Combat Correspondent: World War II in the Pacific* (New York: Ivy Books, 1999); Thayer Soule, *Shooting the Pacific War: Marine Corps Combat Photography in WWII* (Lexington: University of Kentucky Press, 1999); Jim Lucas, *Combat Correspondent* (New York: Reynal and Hitchcock, 1944); Ted Thomey, *Immortal Images: A Personal History of Two Photographers and the Flag Raising on Iwo Jima* (Annapolis: Naval Institute Press, 1996).

his book after World War II during which time the Corps' publicity activities were under extreme outside scrutiny. Frank also wrote for a specific audience, the Combat Correspondents and Photographers Association. Thus, his book, while informative, defends and praises the activities of the Division of Public Relations during World War II. While these books do not represent poor scholarship, they do reflect the realities of the time in which they were written.⁷ Books, manuscripts, and memoirs about Marine Corps history in general are often criticized because of their hagiographic tendencies. While this forces the historian to look critically at these portions of the historiography, perhaps it also reflects the Corps' historic ability to create a cult-like following, both from the public and its Marines.

The Corps' rise in the media throughout the first decade of the twentieth century created suspicion and resentment in some military and political circles. Historian Allan Millett argues that President Theodore Roosevelt "felt that the Corps had inordinate influence on policy-making," an influence heightened by increased political patronage in the Marine officer corps since 1898.⁸ In 1908, based on suggestions from naval officials, President Roosevelt decided that, due to its seemingly redundant role, the Marine Corps better served the navy as an independent landing force.⁹ On November 12 of that year, President Roosevelt removed Marines from the ships of the U.S. fleet. Congress launched

⁷ Robert Lindsay, *This High Name* and Benis M. Frank, *Denig's Demons and How They Grew: The Story of Marine Combat Correspondents, Photographers, and Artists* (Washington, D.C.: Marine Corps Combat Correspondents and Photographers Association, 1967)

⁸ Allan R. Millett, *Semper Fidelis* (New York: Free Press, 1991), 139.

⁹ Millett, *Semper Fidelis*, 139.

an investigation into the question and eventually crushed Roosevelt's Naval Appropriations Bill, keeping the Marine Corps on land and at sea.¹⁰

While the Marine Corps faced extinction on average about once every eleven years throughout its history, the unification crisis of 1908-9 played a key role in the Corps' increased public relations activity throughout its future.¹¹ Amidst an environment of threats to unify or disband the Marine Corps, the service stepped up its activities to increase public support. Just as the "muckrakers" of the era used the news to educate the public about corporate greed, the Marine Corps used institutional publicity to educate the public of its vital role in the military.¹² With a record of battles, campaigns, and police actions, the Marine Corps sought to saturate the public imagination with tales of its exploits. This seemingly simplistic goal, the idea of connecting with the public at the hometown level, gained the Corps recognition throughout America. As early as 1911, the U.S. Marine Corps established a Publicity Bureau in order to craft its public image and manage the news through a close relationship with the press and public.

The inauguration of President Woodrow Wilson in 1913 also marked a significant change to the role the Marine Corps played in enforcing America's foreign policy.¹³ The previous decade of U.S. policies was isolationist compared to the Wilson years. As Wilson's presidency progressed, the Marine Corps continued to take part in interventions

¹⁰ Millett, *Semper Fidelis*, 143.

¹¹ Robert D. Heinl, "The Cat with More than Nine Lives," *U.S. Naval Institute Proceedings* 80, No. 6 (June 1954), 659.

¹² Ewen, *PR!: A Social History of Spin*, 76.

¹³ The relationship between the Wilson Administration and the U.S. Marine Corps is in need of serious scholarly study. During Wilson's presidency, with the help of Secretary of the Navy Josephus Daniels and Congressman Thomas Butler (father of Smedley Butler), the Marine Corps gained serious lobbying power with both Congress and the President. There is a clear surge in the political power of the Marine Corps during this period. A comprehensive study of the origins and outcomes of that political power is beyond the scope of this research, yet still remains of serious importance to the Marine Corps' rise in political spheres.

and police actions, the majority of which brought the Corps to the headlines of newspapers. The rise of Wilson and the progressives created a dialogue and language that cast the Marines' activities as a necessary fight to preserve democracy. Along with America's historical patronage of the Caribbean, Wilson's rise further defined the U.S.'s role in the Caribbean as one of protection and policing. While historians debate the myriad factors of American involvement in the Caribbean, from economic desires to Manifest Destiny, the Marine Corps nevertheless played a significant role.¹⁴ Between the years 1898 and 1917, the Marines landed twenty separate times in the region, and the press continued to laud the actions of Marines throughout.¹⁵

In the U.S., the Marine Corps Publicity Bureau continued to craft the Marines' image in the press. In 1914, the Marine Corps created a new recruiting pamphlet called *The Recruiters' Bulletin*, which was aimed at providing tools for Marine recruiters across the country to publicize the Marine Corps through a focus on Marines' hometowns.¹⁶ Robert Lindsay found that "the Recruiting Publicity Bureau were then not only interested in attracting enlistees but also in that prime aim of every public relations practitioner: getting the name of your institution before the public in a favorable light."¹⁷

For the Marine Corps, taking advantage of their nationwide network of recruiting stations proved key to building a public image. Marines such as Captain Thomas Sterrett, the editor of the *Recruiters' Bulletin* knew that building a connection to the public was

¹⁴ James Field, "American Imperialism: The Worst Chapter in Almost Any Book," *American Historical Review*, Vol. 83 (June 1978): 665.

¹⁵ Captain Harry A. Ellsworth, *One Hundred Eighty Landings of United States Marines, 1800-1934* (Washington, D.C.: Historical Branch, G-3 Division, Headquarters, U.S. Marine Corps, 1974), III-IV.

¹⁶ Lindsay, *This High Name*, 12.

¹⁷ Lindsay, *This High Name*, 13.

key. In one of his earliest non-fiction articles, titled “Working the Newspapers,” Sterrett provided a thorough account of how a recruiter should establish himself in the community, create relationships with prominent local individuals, and approach the newspaper editors in that town.¹⁸ He discussed ideas of morality, reason, and even economics in order to help recruiters understand their role in acquiring new recruits.¹⁹

Sterrett believed recruiting was not just about fulfilling quotas. The point of recruiting was to build relationships and instill ideas within the public. It was not a one-sided concept, but instead an ongoing conversation between the military the public. For this reason, the development of the Publicity Bureau, an organization that according to its own publication was “in the interests of the recruiting of the U.S. Marine Corps,” was pivotal in the creation of the social contract between the U.S. military and their audience, the American public.²⁰

The importance of the Marine Corps publicity campaign also lies in its relevance as a lens through which historians can study the broader history of public relations. During the First World War, the United States Marine Corps built a public relations program that proved far more effective than those of other the military services and very closely mirrored the newest innovations in corporate public relations strategies. The Corps created a public relations system that proved effective during America’s participation in the First World War. With only a few precedents on which to base its own publicity model, the Marine Corps employed the talent of former newspapermen and journalists in order to create an effective system of information distribution.

¹⁸ “Working the Newspapers,” *Recruiters’ Bulletin*, November 1914, 10.

¹⁹ “The Light of Reason,” *Recruiters’ Bulletin*, November 1914, 2.

²⁰ *Recruiters’ Bulletin*, November 1914, 1.

The First World War was a defining event in the Marine Corps' development of an elite image because it was the Corps' first chance to prove itself in full-scale battle. In preparation for the First World War, the Marine Corps created a land contingent to fight on European battlefields. With the help and political activism of Commandant George Barnett, the Corps managed to secure a spot to fight in Europe alongside their army brethren.

Driven by the Corps' Publicity Bureau and the ideas disseminated through the *Recruiters' Bulletin*, the Marine Corps operated a tremendously opportunistic publicity campaign throughout the war. The former newspaper personnel who directed the Corps' publicity activities made sure that no chance to put the Corps in front of the public was missed. From placing the *Eagle*, *Globe*, and *Anchor* in shop windows to the education of postmasters around the country to aid in the Corps' recruiting activities, the Marines, more than the other services, knew that the primary goal of its campaigns had to be focused on educating the public about the Corps and its mission.

One example of the Marines' public relations accomplishments was that their most important recruiting slogan of the war, "First to Fight," thoroughly permeated the public consciousness to the point that it is still used in reference to the Marines a century later. Editors of several newspapers and magazines across the country marveled at the Corps' ability to gain recruits with the "First to Fight" slogan. Ultimately, "First to Fight" defined not only the public image the Corps saw in itself but also it helped to attract the type of recruits to the Marine Corps that would help to reinforce their elite identity. The Corps was able to lean on its history of interventions and police actions around the world

to fulfill its claims to be the “first to fight.” Without Commandant Barnett’s ability to get the Corps into Europe, it might never have taken off with such success.

Throughout the war, the Marine Corps represented a small fraction of the troops on the both the European front and the home front, yet the Marines crafted an effective public image of their successes on the battlefield along with the multiplication of the stories by the Publicity Bureau at home. With the expertise of civilian journalists, newspapermen, and ad men, the Marine Corps focused on small details on the home front, assuring that the public knew the difference between the Marines and the other services, further pushing the Corps’ name into the limelight. On top of those factors, the bending of the censorship rules in theater so that the Marines could be called out by name also helped the public the Corps’ wartime saga.²¹ With stories such as those of *Chicago Tribune* reporter Floyd Gibbons at Belleau Wood reaching the major newspapers in the U.S., the Corps also managed to achieve a level of combat legitimacy that it had not previously attained, thus perhaps securing its position in American wars for the indefinite future. Nicknames such as “Devil Dogs,” became tremendously popular for Marine publicity, despite the debate surrounding the validity that it was a name actually used by the Germans.

Even though the Marines represented a small fraction of the vast armed forces engaged in Europe, back in the U.S., the name of the Marines began to become familiar to Americans, not just as a group of soldiers fighting in small islands and exotic locations, but also as a battle-tested combat unit fighting alongside the other services.

²¹ Dennis Showalter. “The Evolution of the U.S. Marine Corps into a Military Elite in the Twentieth Century.” *Marine Corps Gazette* 63 (November 1979): 48.

Numerous factors at play in Europe, including the fighting ability of the Marines, the ability for journalists to single out Marines in the press at home without breaking censorship rules, and favorable news from correspondents in the field all helped to legitimize the Corps as a combat institution. Back in the U.S., the Corps' Publicity Bureau, hosted events like "National U.S. Marine Corps Recruiting Week," which helped to familiarize the Corps' public image at a hometown level. The Corps' ability to create and disseminate a discussion around the successes and failures of recruiting across the country through the *Recruiters' Bulletin* truly set it apart from the other services.

The First World War had done much for the publicity of the Marines and it was then the duty of the Corps' leadership to legitimize the Corps' position within the U.S. military. When John Archer Lejeune succeeded Major General George Barnett as commandant in 1920, he immediately began to reorganize the Marine Corps from headquarters down. Lejeune introduced sweeping reforms, including a new system of promotion and the establishment of the Marine Corps Schools, a predecessor of the Marine Corps Command and General Staff College. His reforms continued to focus on how the Corps was represented in the American public through history and legend. These actions, including the establishment of a Marine Corps Historical Center, helped to solidify the Corps' focus on the preservation and publication of its history. Lejeune continued the legacies of the *Recruiters' Bulletin* by maintaining an open mind and a drive for public relations. Even small reforms, such as the establishment of a mandatory Marine Corps Birthday celebration every year, helped to mythologize the Corps' traditions.

Lejeune also made sure Marines participated in charity and volunteer projects, which, like Major Tom Sterrett's press clipping service in World War I, cost little, but proved particularly effective. In a memo the Officer in Charge of Marine Corps Recruitment in 1922, David D. Porter noted that an activity such as "Orphan Outings," in which Marines escort orphans around town and to nearby battlefields, "helps to mold public opinion in favor of our service" and find "widespread publicity in many newspaper far distant from that city."²² Lejeune was an expert at getting the most out of the Marine Corps for the least amount of money through making cuts in areas where he could get advertising for free.²³

Lejeune's progressive focus on education helped Marines, both officers and enlisted, to improve themselves through the Corps' schools and programs. With the introduction of the Marine Corps Institute in 1920, Lejeune created an enlisted education system for Marines around the world to better themselves, and at the same time, the public image of the Marine Corps. This was an example of Lejeune's focus on averting problems with Marines being seen as drunken and disorderly sailor-types. With an education, a mission, and a network of veteran Marines that comprised a type of brotherhood, the Marine Corps could endure and create its own self-fulfilling legacy.

Even when faced with a public image crisis sparked by unrest and controversy from the Corps' activities in Haiti in 1920, Lejeune helped to manage the Corps'

²² Colonel David D. Porter to Officer in Charge of Recruiting, Headquarters, Marine Corps, November 6, 1922, Folder: "Newspapers and Magazines," Box 8, Entry 18, Records of the U.S. Marine Corps, General Correspondence, 1913-1938, Record Group (RG) 127, National Archives and Records Administration I, Washington, D.C. (NADC)

²³ Major General Commandant to Secretary of the Navy, Subj: Cost of Advertising, February 10, 1930, Folder "Expense of Advertising," Box 8, Entry 18, Records of the U.S. Marine Corps, General Correspondence, 1913-1938, RG 127, NADC.

response in order to soften the blow, especially during an election year. Lejeune leaned on the American public and press to alter the narrative around the situation in Haiti, where Marines were accused of excessive force and even murder. Lejeune's visits to Haiti and rejections of the stories that emerged there, re-focused the public conversation. Instead, Lejeune spoke publicly about the facets of Haitian society that were different and uncanny to the American people, such as the practice of Voodoo and cannibalism as a way to solicit the public's attention and favor.

Representation of the Corps in American popular culture also excelled under Lejeune's leadership. Films such as *What Price Glory?* and *Tell it to the Marines* helped to further refine the Corps' public image under the supervision and approval of Lejeune and Marine leadership. While the Corps was not involved in the creation of *What Price Glory?* its controversial opening on Broadway and *Tell it to the Marines'* success at the box office helped to bring the Marine Corps further into the public imagination. With *Tell it to the Marines*, Lejeune sought out MGM in order to make a film that was completed with the express permission and help of the Marine Corps in order to create a sort of recruiting film through a Hollywood motion picture. These silent films still managed to include content and words that gave the Corps the edgy public image it needed to keep up its image as an elite service.

The effectiveness of the Marine Corps public relations program was not only recognized by the government and the other military services, but also by the private sector. Whereas the Marine Corps at first took its public relations lessons from private corporations such as AT&T, numerous corporations sought out or commended the Marine Corps' publicity methods during the interwar period. In 1927, Irving S. Bailey,

the director of the agency department at Aetna Life Insurance Company sent a letter to Headquarters, Marine Corps. In it, Bailey notes that the Corps' methods and success was well known in the private sector. He wrote, "we are very much interested in the methods used by the United States Marine Corps in recruiting men because we believe this same practice could be used to attract men to the insurance business." He went on to say that he would make sure every man would know the Marine Corps' name in association with their methods.²⁴

The director of the du Pont Corporation's advertising department also commented on the Corps' attention and enthusiasm to advertising methods in 1923. After sending the company's agent to the Marine Corps to get some facts about its history, the director of advertising expressed his "deep appreciation," for the "cordial cooperation" the Corps showed in aiding the agent in his work.²⁵ These examples show that Lejeune built upon the public relations successes gained since 1898. Without a fight for a purpose in the U.S. military and without the foresight of Marines in establishing publicity bureaus and setting recruiting precedents, Lejeune would not have excelled despite the massive budget and manpower cuts of the 1920s. The Marine Corps, therefore, underwent its most serious and dramatic changes during this period.

The periodization of this study purposely shifts the focus of common arguments surrounding the development of the modern Marine Corps. The institutional history of the Marine Corps before the development of the Fleet Marine Force in 1933 is often

²⁴ Irving S. Bailey to Headquarters, U.S. Marine Corps, March 11, 1927, Folder: "MC Literature" Box 8, Entry 18, Records of the U.S. Marine Corps, General Correspondence, 1913-1938, RG 127, NADC.

²⁵ Du Pont Advertising Department to Adjutant and Inspector, U.S. Marine Corps, October 25, 1922, Folder: "Newspapers and Magazines," Box 8, Entry 18, Records of the U.S. Marine Corps, General Correspondence, 1913-1938, RG 127, NADC.

presented as a forethought or simple precursor to the Corps' experience in World War II. Many historians highlight the honored tradition of Marines who fought in the "Banana Wars" on the islands of Cuba, Haiti, and Santo Domingo, or on foreign duty in China, Siberia, or Mexico, and in the first truly World War in Europe, as the significant factors in allowing the Corps to reach mythic heights by the Second World War. Yet, these combat tours, interventions, and police actions did not alone separate the Marine Corps from the army and navy. Without the intentional use of publicity and the emerging science of public relations, the Marine Corps could not have enticed the American public to rally on the side of Marines or recognize the Corps as the tip of America's fighting spear. Along with the brave exploits of many combat Marines, it was the publicity men, former newspapermen, writers, poets, journalists, and correspondents who truly created the Marine Corps that would eventually project itself into the future as America's elite—"the few, the proud."

As the Marine Corps entered World War II, the service built on years of institutionalized public relations strategy and again sought out media professionals to help bring the Marines' wartime experiences to the public. That the Marine Corps participated almost singularly in the Pacific Theater helped the Corps to consolidate its new releases and streamline its tactics to overcome tight censorship. By February 1945, the Marine Corps achieved what is arguably the most recognizable image of the Corps, if not of the entire war, with the flag-raising at Iwo Jima. It was this moment in the war that Secretary of the Navy James Forrestal observed, "the raising of that flag on Suribachi

means a Marine Corps for the next 500 years.”²⁶ It is important to understand, however, that the systematic exploitation of the image by the Corps’ entire wartime public relations system led to the effectiveness of that image.

In 1941, then Commandant Thomas Holcomb selected World War I veteran Brigadier General Robert L. Denig to lead the Corps’ newly established Division of Public Relations. General Denig quickly established a system of recruiting civilians who had knowledge of public relations, news, photography, and other mediums to become Marines, so that they better understood the Corps and could have closer relationships with the Marines themselves in the field. The organization Denig created, known as Marine Corps Combat Correspondents (CC), set the Corps apart from the other services in how it dealt with news and publicity during the war. By turning media professionals into Marines, the Corps once again institutionalized its public image.

In order to reach out to the public and continue to connect the Marine Corps to American communities, the Corps deployed CCs to the Pacific to collect stories from the enlisted men of the Corps. These stories received the nickname “Joe Blow” stories because of their distribution to the Marines’ local newspapers across the country. While many stories were popular enough to reach many newspapers, the idea of reporting on an individual service member for their hometowns was unique in the military establishment. Just as they had in World War I, the Marine Corps built on its network of national recruiting centers to extend its reach into middle American. Most stories during the war involved either news about local casualties or just big-picture updates about the war, Joe

²⁶ J. Robert Moskin, *The U.S. Marine Corps Story* (New York: Back Bay Books, 1977), 364.

Blow stories offered the public positive news items to read about a local Marine that might also give them context of the war's progress. By 1943, the CCs' stories were so well-written and appreciated by local communities that "almost every local editor responded and soon the country was covered with Marine Corps Joe Blow stories."²⁷

While other historians and writers have analyzed the Marine Corps CC system, the continuity of the Corps' previous public relations efforts is often ignored. Since 1907, some members of the Marine Corps understood the importance of involving the families and hometowns of Marines. That the Corps' "Joe Blow" stories permeated American society seems clear as by the outset of World War II, the Marine Corps managed to receive the title of "a propaganda machine that is almost equal to Stalin's" from President Truman.²⁸

While the Marine Corps Combat Correspondents helped the Corps to convey its image through newsworthy "Joe Blow" stories to hometowns throughout the war, censorship, recruiting challenges, and internal debates over the nature of the Corps' public image continued to play a role in the service's public relations decision making. The Marine Corps' invasion of Tarawa in November 1943 and a Marine motion picture photographer's film from that battle was a crucial moment of decision for Marine leadership as it pertained to their image in the war. Chapter 5 examines the civil-military context of the public reaction to the Battle of Tarawa and the film created by the Corps itself, *With the Marines at Tarawa*.

²⁷ Frank, *Denig's Demons*, 22.

²⁸ President Harry Truman as quoted in Millett, *Semper Fidelis*, 496.

For the Marine Corps, a confluence of important events in 1943 created both opportunities and challenges to their recruiting and the continuation of their image as an elite fighting unit. In 1943, the Roosevelt Administration and the Office of War Information (OWI) sought to reduce the amount of censorship applied to news material coming from the fronts. This was especially applied to images of the war as Elmer Davis, the head of the OWI and President Roosevelt believed that the American public were not prepared for the true costs of war up to that point. It was because of these changes that the Marine Corps, with the personal blessing of President Roosevelt, was able to release a motion picture film in early 1944 that displayed the dead bodies of Marines who fell during the battle, all displayed in brilliant Technicolor. The film, *With the Marines at Tarawa*, was shot by a young enlisted Marine, Staff Sergeant Norman Hatch, who had experience filming short documentaries with the *March of Time*. Hatch's knowledge and understanding of the importance of narrative in filmmaking helped to bring his footage to life in front of audiences across the country.

In 1943, President Roosevelt also forced the military services, including the Marine Corps to accept new recruits only through Selective Service system. This was a tremendous blow to the Marine Corps' recruiting process because it relied so heavily, as it did in the First World War, on its claims to be an elite, volunteer driven service. Regardless of the validity of these claims during the war, the Corps' inability to focus on volunteer enlistments forced it to change its approach to recruiting. In order to continue accepting volunteers, the Corps opened up enlistments to 17-year-olds, who could commit to serving in the Marine Corps, only with their parents' permission.

With the new lowered censorship rules and the Corps' new recruiting process for younger recruits, the Battle of Tarawa and subsequent film stirred up a debate both in the public and within the Marine Corps at the same time. Marine recruiters across the country wrote into the Corps' Division of Public Relations to voice their concerns about the film and to discuss the negative reaction of those who viewed it at theaters, especially women and children. While the parents of a potential recruit were always an important part of the Marines' public interactions (as the Corps cited so much parental praise for the Joe Blow stories), the need for parental permission to sign up volunteers forced recruiters to work more closely with parents, and thus made the film's impact significant for some recruiters who cried foul when their numbers dropped after the film's release.

General Denig and the Division of Public Relations, however, did not take the same view of the recruiters who complained of the film's release. When the DPR conducted a poll across the nation, it found that some recruiters did run into trouble with parents of recruits and might have seen a dip in recruiting numbers during that period. However, these recruiters also found that it was drawing more recruits than it seemed to deter. It was this interaction as well, that revealed much in the way of how Marines, especially the DPR, saw its public image. While certainly the "Joe Blow" stories of heroism, triumph, or just everyday occurrences brought the Corps into the hometowns of Americans in a personal way, the Corps still saw its image as that of an elite and battle-hardened service, and if that meant that the public needed to see that its own Marines died for a cause, it was certainly appropriate and not to be hidden away.

The end of the Second World War brought with it many institutional changes to both the Marine Corps and the entire U.S. military. As U.S. forces entered into

occupations throughout Europe and Asia, their chain of command began to change. Congress's actions to both draw down and streamline the American military for efficiency meant the Marine Corps faced another challenge to its existence. The postwar period brought with it an end to the flexibility afforded to the combat correspondents and public relations officers in World War II. With the creation of the Department of Defense in 1948, all public relations efforts were filtered through an even larger bureaucratic system. In no war after 1945 would the Marines achieve the same positive publicity with the American public as they had in World War II. As CC Alvin Josephy confidently noted, there were a "peculiar set of circumstances working in World War II that were just wonderful for this."²⁹ The new Post-World War II order, however, tested the success of the Marine Corps' public relations efforts over the previous 50 years.

For nearly a century of its existence, the Marine Corps has defined its members upon the basis that they are no longer average men, but something more; Marines. From 1911, the Marine Corps built a publicity model using methodologies from both the private and public sectors. While the army and navy also employed public relations methods, the Marine Corps took advantage of its small size and *esprit de corps* to take its case directly to the public; a move that separated the Corps from the rest of the military and eventually gained it unsurpassed popularity. In 1947, the Marine Corps removed unit patches from their uniforms further signifying that Marines did not need specialized units to create *esprit de corps*. Since then, joining the Marine Corps itself meant becoming part of an elite fighting unit.³⁰ This distinction has set the Marine Corps apart from its fellow

²⁹ Denig, interviewed by Frank and Josephy, May 24, 1967, 86.

³⁰ Dennis Showalter. "The Evolution of the U.S. Marine Corps into a Military Elite in the Twentieth Century." *Marine Corps Gazette* 63 (November 1979), 51.

services throughout most of the twentieth century. To create this public image, the Marine Corps took advantage of media and publicity to instill the idea of an elite Corps into the public mind. With the establishment of a public relations model, the Marine Corps solidified its position as an integral and elite institution in the U.S. military.

CHAPTER I – THE PUBLIC RELATIONS RENAISSANCE OF THE MARINE CORPS, 1898-1916

From the Spanish-American War through the First World War, the Marine Corps experienced a public relations renaissance. The Marines, once the little understood sister service of the much larger and more publicly present U.S. Navy, began to see service around the world as the United States expanded with its new territories and increased interventionism. In an eager and sensationalist turn-of-the-century press, the Marines found a direct line to the public with which it could help to educate and publicize the history and current actions of the Corps. By 1907, the Corps began to institutionalize this relationship with the press through the introduction of a regional publicity bureau at its largest recruiting center, Chicago, Illinois. Following the near removal of Marines from the ships of the navy in 1908 and 1909, the Corps again stepped up its public image management through the creation of an official Marine Corps Publicity Bureau in 1911. The Publicity Bureau served all the recruiting stations of the Marine Corps and in 1914 began to distribute the *Recruiters' Bulletin*, its own trade publication regarding the crafting of the Corps' public image for recruiters. The Corps' institutionalization of a public relations strategy from 1898-1916 represented some of the earliest of its kind in the military and ultimately defined a system and a strategy the proved successful for the Corps as it entered the First World War.

When the USS *Maine* exploded in 1898, the tremendous public reaction became an unprecedented and unexpected moment for the Marine Corps and an introduction into the importance of publicity in the new century. The newspapers of the time all sought to cover the drama that unfolded in Havana Harbor that day. This brought Marines such as

Private William Anthony into the public eye. Private Anthony's actions that day were one of the first "human interest" stories to appear in the news following the massive explosion. On February 17, 1898, the *New York Evening World* reported:

It is told of Captain Sigsbee that he was writing a letter to his wife in the port cabin when the explosion occurred. All the lights were instantly extinguished. Sigsbee, running out, bumped into a perfectly disciplined marine orderly, who, amid shrieks, groans, flames and horror, and in the dark, saluted and said: "I have to inform you that the ship has been blown up and is sinking."
...The brave marine is named Anthony. He said to me to-day when I spoke of it: "Oh, that's nothing; any Yankee marine would do that."³¹

A *New York Times* article in July 1898 compared Private Anthony's handling of the situation with a British Royal Marine who nearly 150 years earlier advised a British admiral that the HMS *Royal George* was sinking by similarly stating "The ship is turning over, Sir, and will go down."³² The story went on to state that "it is hoped that the military politicians of both countries [Great Britain and the United States] will allow to live the "ever faithful" corps that have done so much, have so much that is worthy in common, and have been so little understood by the civilian."³³

The Marine Corps' participation in American police actions and "small wars" of the early twentieth century made the small service the darling of a distinctly sensationalist press. With American expansion throughout the world and the Corps' early success in the Spanish-American War, a symbiotic relationship developed between the Marines and American newspaper publishers. As the Marines increasingly became the

³¹ Sylvester Scovel, "Significant was the Speech of Secretary Congosto," *The Evening World*, February 17, 1898, as reprinted in *The New Orleans Times-Picayune*, February 18, 1898.

³² "The Marine Corps," *New York Times*, July 25, 1898.

³³ "The Marine Corps," *New York Times*, July 25, 1898.

first troops ashore during several different well-publicized expeditions both in the Pacific and in the Caribbean, the press was there to report on the dramatic actions that took place. As the Marines increasingly showed up in American newspaper headlines, the realization began to take place within some recruiting stations that the Corps could even help to supply and control the news about the service through internally crafted and well-written pieces delivered to the newspapers themselves.

While the U.S. Marine Corps was informally established in 1775, it was not until the navy took a prominent role in American expansionism that the service managed to gain individual press attention and thus begin to develop an understanding of its own public image. In the first century of their existence, Marines largely served shipboard duties, such as policemen, sharpshooters, and small landing parties for the capital ships of the navy.³⁴ Due to their small size and largely integrated role within the navy, the Marine Corps, while a distinguished service, rarely competed with the navy for roles and missions. With the Spanish-American War, however, the Marine Corps was deployed in a manner far different than it had been in the past. Not only was the Corps assembled as an infantry unit in a major combat action but also it served with a perceived distinction, unlike some of its previous combat experience.

The Marine Corps actions in the American Civil War represented perhaps the Corps' most important previous land engagement prior to the Spanish-American War. There are few histories of the Corps' activities in the Civil War and even fewer historians who speak highly of those actions. Marine Corps Historian Allan Millett argues that "the

³⁴ Robert Debs Heinl, Jr. *Soldiers of the Sea: The United States Marine Corps, 1775-1962*. (1962. Reprint, Baltimore: Nautical and Aviation Press, 1991).

Marine Corps began the Civil War on the defensive both tactically and institutionally, and it never recovered.”³⁵ Battlefield performance for both Union and Confederate Marines gave the postwar Corps a reputation for cowardice and confusion. Union Marines panicked and ran as their combined army-navy brigade collapsed at the First Battle of Manassas (Bull Run) in 1861, and an attempted amphibious landing at Fort Fisher, North Carolina in 1865 was easily repelled. These incidents are an example of the few land engagements the Marines attempted during the war, however, their time aboard the ships of the Union in blockading duty was considered successful, if uneventful.³⁶ The Confederate Marines, on the other hand, remained a small outfit, less than 1,000 strong for most of the war. Without the infrastructure of the former U.S. Navy, Confederate Marines did not retain much support for missions broader than guarding posts and stations in the South.³⁷ Both the Corps and the navy as a whole emerged from the Civil War as relatively damaged institutions. Officers and sailors of the navy spent much of their time in blockade duty and the Corps’ inability to establish itself as an effective military arm in land engagements prevented both services from modernization and evolution.³⁸

In the decades after the Civil War, however, the navy and the Marine Corps both experienced a time of change and institutional modernization, albeit for different reasons. It was during this period that the U.S. Navy experienced a technological revolution with the development and refinement of steam-powered ships and advanced gun systems, both

³⁵ Allan R. Millett, *Semper Fidelis: The History of the United States Marine Corps*. rev. ed. (New York: Macmillan, 1991), 93.

³⁶ Millett, *Semper Fidelis*, 97-99.

³⁷ Millett, *Semper Fidelis*, 100-101.

³⁸ Edwin H. Simmons, *The United States Marines, 1775-1975* (New York: Viking Press, 1976), 46.

requiring more educated and engineering-savvy sailors. As America began to expand overseas, the navy prepared to adapt to its new role as the front line of America's frontier. Along with these developments, "naval reformers and professionals inaugurated an intellectual ferment within the navy that led to new thinking about naval warfare," and since during this period all Marine officers came from the Naval Academy, the reformer sentiment worked its way into the Corps' own development.³⁹

Naval reform in the 1880s and 1890s took on several forms. New technology allowed naval strategists such as Alfred Thayer Mahan to contemplate the ways in which faster ships with better defensive armor and more firepower should fit into American war planning. The importance of engineering knowledge and advanced education to take advantage of the new technologies also thrust forward a new class of officers anxious for promotion based on their merits and not the tradition of promotions based on time served. This movement had an important impact on the Marine Corps through officers who attended the Naval Academy, such as John A. Lejeune.

This reformist mindset also translated into the Corps' leadership beginning to seek out specific missions for the Marine Corps. As naval officers achieved professionalization through higher education due to the navy's new technological needs, the Marines faced the prospect of falling behind due to their outdated duties aboard ships. The reform and modernization then undertaken by Colonel Commandant Heywood is important to the Corps' later transformation because it put Marines in positions of power and rank sufficient enough to enact change and achieve the goal of establishing the Corps as a flexible multi-role service, able to serve on land and at sea.

³⁹ Shulimson, *Search for a Mission*, 10.

Under Colonel Heywood, the Marine Corps continued to add officers from the Naval Academy and attracted better cadets because it offered quicker promotion among the ranks. With more motivated and politically connected officers, the Marine Corps accelerated its modernization. With the introduction of the Marine Corps School of Application and other educational opportunities for enlisted men, and with the Corps' officers attending the Naval and Army War Colleges, the Marine Corps added to the quality and professionalization of its Marines.⁴⁰ While the professionalization of the Corps' officership occurred in small steps in the late nineteenth century, the results transformed the Corps of the twentieth century.

While the professionalization of the Corps' officers put Marines in positions to enact institutional change, it was the Spanish-American War that instigated the Corps to emerge from its nineteenth century "doldrums."⁴¹ Even with the navy's expansionist mission, it was not until the Spanish-American War that Marines served as an expeditionary land force. Ironically, the Corps later fought vigorously against their use as an independent amphibious landing force in the early 1900s, yet it was the Corps' actions in Cuba which laid the groundwork for its future doctrine and public image. At the outbreak of the war "naval authorities immediately ordered the establishment of a Marine battalion with its own transport."⁴² The Marine battalion concentrated a larger number of Marines and envisioned their use as ground combat troops, not just a landing party; an entirely new role for the Marine Corps.

⁴⁰ Shulimson, *Search for Mission*, 122.

⁴¹ Allan R. Millett, "The Marine Corps Survives Its Doldrums, 1859-1889," in *Semper Fidelis: The History of the United States Marine Corps*. rev. ed. (New York: Macmillan, 1991), 87-114.

⁴² Shulimson, "Military Professionalism," 240.

The Spanish-American War was central to the early development of the Corps' public image because of the conflict's widely publicized nature from the eager news press of the day. It was the first major American conflict in this period and the Marines became the first object of what historian Clyde Metcalf considered an "impatient press always demanding actions."⁴³ In June of 1898, numerous press correspondents joined the Marines for the first American military mission of the war, the landing at Guantanamo Bay, Cuba. Historian Charles Brown referred to the conflict as the "Correspondent's War."⁴⁴ Journalists and correspondents wielded a type of power previously unknown to the press. Shortly after the war, journalist Murat Halstead wrote:

The press of the United States largely took very extraordinary attitudes with respect to the war of our country with Spain. It was the belief of several great journals and journalists that they must be held accountable for the state of hostilities. They assumed airs of authority as to its management, its object...gave as much prominence to views as to news, and pursued the cultivation and vindication of theories with even greater warmth and energy than they gathered and displayed from day to day the incidents of intelligence that were of the nature of information about the conduct of hostilities.⁴⁵

By the Spanish-American War, the newspaper industry experienced a revolution in technology and economy, which meant that the press then had the ability to reach many more households across the U.S. According to historian Richard Kaplan, expansion of the printing industry was primarily the product of "innovations in printing technology,

⁴³ Clyde H. Metcalf, *A History of the United States Marine Corps* (New York: Putnam, 1939), quoted in Robert George Lindsay, *This High Name: Public Relations and the United States Marine Corps* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1956), 10.

⁴⁴ Charles H. Brown, *The Correspondent's War: Journalists in the Spanish-American War* (New York, NY: Scribner, 1967).

⁴⁵ Brown, *Correspondent's War*, vi.

increasing advertising revenues, lower paper costs, and the drive for greater profits.”⁴⁶ As a result of those profits won during this democratization of the news, competition among the newspapers led to journalists seeking out dramatic headlines and news.⁴⁷

At the onset of the conflict, the American press eagerly reported on the actions of American forces with little regard for the veracity of the news that made it to newspapers back in the U.S. News of Admiral Dewey’s destruction of the Spanish fleet at the Philippines “electrified American public opinion” and the anxious wait for action in the Caribbean became palpable.⁴⁸ On June 7, 1898, a small detachment of Marines landed at Guantanamo Bay for a reconnaissance. On June 10, the 650-strong Marine First Battalion landed on Cuba, the first substantial American unit to do so. The Corps’ ability to quickly deploy this oversized yet flexible battalion to Cuba made sure that the Marines dominated the headlines in the United States until the army landed at Santiago on June 22. By June 9, even before the main Marine force landed, the *Washington Post* had already reported in a headline that “Our Flag is There.” The article remarked briefly on the hazy details of the Marines’ landing.⁴⁹ In time, the stories became more elaborate. While the official reports described the landing of Marines as a march in the “blazing afternoon sun,” in which the “sweating Marines dragged their gear across the beach, climbed a hill, and pitched camp,” the media accounts were, as expected, more dramatic.⁵⁰

⁴⁶ Richard L. Kaplan, *A History of the Book in America: Volume 4. Print in Motion: The Expansion of Publishing and Reading in the United States, 1880-1940* (Chapel Hill: North Carolina Press), 116.

⁴⁷ Kaplan, *Print in Motion*, 116.

⁴⁸ Jack Shulimson, LtCol David Kelly, Evelyn A. Englander, and Wanda J. Renfrow, *Marines in the Spanish-American War, 1859-1899: Anthology and Annotated Bibliography* (Washington, D.C.: Historical Branch, G-3 Division, Headquarters, U.S. Marine Corps, 1998), 49.

⁴⁹ “Our Flag is There,” *Washington Post*, June 9, 1898.

⁵⁰ Bernard C. Nalty, *The United States Marines in the War with Spain* (Washington, D.C.: Historical Branch, G-3 Division, Headquarters, U.S. Marine Corps, 1959), 9.

On June 12, the *New York Times* reported that “the invasion of Cuba by American forces began today. Six hundred Marines have pitched their tents about the smoking ruins of the outer fortifications of Guantanamo, and the Stars and Stripes for the first-time float from a Spanish flagstaff in Cuba.”⁵¹ Even though the Marines waited in Key West for weeks prior, making trouble with the naval personnel attached to their transport and getting restless to the point of a potentially bad news story, the Corps’ participation as the first troops on the ground in Cuba led to a much better story as the conflict began. The language in the *New York Times* article connected the Corps with the patriotism of a flag being raised after a “battle.” It also conjured an image of the aftermath of a great invasion in which the Marines defeated the Spanish on Cuba, which was not in any way what occurred during those first days.⁵² On the day the *New York Times* released that article, however, the Spanish did come out to fight and engaged the Marines there in a battle that grabbed headlines and help define the Corps’ public image during the conflict.

As the Spanish began to attack Marine lines, numerous American war correspondents joined the Corps to report on the early stages of battle. Among the correspondents and the Marines was novelist, poet, and writer, Stephen Crane. While published after the war, Crane’s collection of stories, *Wounds in the Rain*, provides the human side of the Corps’ experience against the Spanish, accounts that rarely appear in the official sources and histories. Crane spent time with four Marines on the beach at Camp McCalla who were tasked with signaling to the navy offshore:

⁵¹“Our Flag Flies at Guantanamo,” *New York Times*, June 12, 1898.

⁵² Dennis Showalter, “The Evolution of the U.S. Marine Corps into a Military Elite in the Twentieth Century.” *Marine Corps Gazette* (November 1979), 47.

It was my good fortune – at that time I considered it my bad fortune indeed – to be with them on two of the nights when a wild storm of fighting was pealing about the hill; and, of all the actions of the war, none were so hard on the nerves, none strained courage so near the panic point, as those swift nights in Camp McCalla. With a thousand rifles rattling; with the field guns booming in your ears; with the diabolic Colt automatic clacking; with the roar of the *Marblehead* coming from the bay, and at last, with Mauser bullets sneering always in the air a few inches over one's head, and with this enduring from dusk to dawn, it is extremely doubtful if any one who was there will be able to forget it easily.⁵³

Crane's untimely death at age 28 in 1900 struck a blow to America's war correspondents. His reporting was considered some of the most realistic of its time and is still provides some of the most detailed accounts of Marines in the Spanish-American War.

The articles that appeared in American newspapers published only days after the events at Guantanamo began to include language that lifted the Corps' public image and reputation. Concepts such as coolness under fire, fighting spirit, and bravery were often used to describe the Corps' fighting there. A June 15 *New York Times* article titled "The Fighting at Guantanamo" stated, "thus far the Marines have had the best of the fighting, but the situation is grave, and they are exhausted with repelling almost incessant attacks."⁵⁴ In the same article, the correspondent with the Marines observed that "the Marines show spirit under the persistent fire of the Spanish bushwhackers, the officers particularly exhibiting the coolness and nerve of seasoned campaigners."⁵⁵

⁵³ Stephen Crane, *Wounds in the Rain: A Collection of War Stories Relating to the Spanish-American War of 1898* (London: Methuen & Co., 1900), 178-179; The USS *Marblehead* was an American armored cruiser with the responsibility of providing cover fire for the American Marines at Guantanamo. Oddly enough, the *Marblehead* accidentally shelled Marines on numerous occasions during the war.

⁵⁴"Fighting at Guantanamo," *New York Times*, June 15, 1898.

⁵⁵"Fighting at Guantanamo," *New York Times*, June 15, 1898.

At the same time that the Marine Corps received praise in the press for their actions in Cuba, the lack of planning for the army's deployment to Cuba also found its way to the front pages. On June 16, an article in the *New York Times*, titled "The Army of Invasion: Lack of Method in Moving it from Tampa the Talk of Washington," focused on the "confusion, detention, lack of agreement on plan, absence of prior calculation, and arrangement" of the army forces meant to go to Cuba.⁵⁶ The contrast between the navy and Marine Corps' early successes in the Spanish-American War did little for the army's own public image and helped the Corps to stand out as a successfully deployed ground force.

The Marine Corps' position as the first to land in Cuba and thus the first to open ground combat allowed the Corps to stand out in the public imagination due to the comprehensive coverage of the war's early days. Clyde Metcalf noted that the Marines, "being the first to land on Cuban soil and the first to raise the American flag over the island, seemed to be particularly gratifying for the impatient press." He also argued that "performance of the Marine battalion, while ashore around Guantanamo Bay, was for the first time being the focal point of war news . . . The publicity given and the reputation won aided materially in a rapid expansion of the Corps soon after the war and in a great enlargement of its fields of activity."⁵⁷ If "any publicity is good publicity," then Marines continued to gain publicity through hundreds of articles for the next year in major

⁵⁶ "The Army of Invasion: Lack of Method in Moving it from Tampa the Talk of Washington," *New York Times*, June 16, 1898.

⁵⁷ Clyde H. Metcalf, *A History of the United States Marine Corps* (New York: Putnam, 1939), quoted in Robert Lindsay, *This High Name*, 10.

newspapers, most of which praised the Marines for their actions on board the *Maine* and at Cuba.

The Marine Corps' participation in the Spanish-American War, particularly as the first major combat unit to land ashore, gained the attention of the American press. Article headlines such as "Heroism of Americans," "Thanks Proposed to the Marines," "Routed the Enemy," "Valor of the Marines," "Our Gallant Marines," "Praise for the Marines," and "Record of the Marines," all portrayed the Marines in the language of heroism and gallantry at Guantanamo.⁵⁸ For a service that had yet to establish a firm mission prior to the war, their short but fiery experience in Cuba allowed both the press and the American public to understand the Corps' abilities in battle. Recognition on the part of the Marines of the benefits offered by this type of press led to the Corps' later strategies to help control and manage the stories that the public read in the newspapers.

While the Spanish capitulation in August 1898 represented an end to the war, for the Marine Corps, the war opened up new frontiers. New American possessions, including Manila in the Philippines, led the Marines across the Pacific for occupation duty. Rather than postwar demobilization, the Marine Corps instead began to act as America's "expansionist" police force. Fortunately for the Corps, their ability to deploy quickly to the Philippines allowed the Marines to participate in active operations to secure naval bases. It also meant that Marines were forward deployed in the Asia-Pacific region, ready to act as an American quick-reaction force.

⁵⁸"Heroism of Americans," *Washington Post*, June 5, 1898; "Thanks Proposed to the Marines," *Washington Post*, July 8, 1898; "Routed the Enemy," *Washington Post*, June 16, 1898; and "Valor of the Marines," *New York Times*, June 27, 1898; "Our Gallant Marines," *New York Times*, September 26, 1898; "Praise for the Marines," *New York Times*, August 11, 1898; and "Record of the Marines," *New York Times*, October 23, 1898.

In 1900, as the Philippine occupation gained a negative perception in the U.S., the Corps received an opportunity to improve their reputation with a deployment to China. In the north, some of the country's poorest regions began to experience massive uprisings against Western interference in the country and especially foreign missionaries. These uprisings were led by a group called the "Society of Righteous and Harmonious Fists," later termed the "Boxers." As these protests entered into large cities such as Peking, Western nations mobilized their military elements to defend their civilian missionaries.⁵⁹ Said to have numbered in the millions, the Boxers attacked numerous missions and legations. Missionaries, as well as civilian men, women, and children, were killed in the path of destruction created by the Boxers. Western powers, along with Japan, believed that the Chinese Dowager Empress Tzu His was too weak to suppress the uprising, which meant that thousands more European, Japanese, and Russian missionaries were in harm's way.⁶⁰ In response, the militaries of these nations, including Austria-Hungary, Germany, Great Britain, France, Japan, and Russia sent in their own troops to protect their interests and civilians.⁶¹

As tensions rose in China, it was the Marines that were the first American combat force to arrive. On May 31, 1900, two ship's detachments, numbering roughly 50 Marines, landed at Peking. The American press took great interest in the conflict growing in China as it was well-suited to "David versus Goliath" narratives. Having learned the powerful attraction of war stories, newspapers across the country were eager to report the news from China, especially as it pertained to American forces there, which at first

⁵⁹ Millett, *Semper Fidelis*, 155.

⁶⁰ Millett, *Semper Fidelis*, 156.

⁶¹ Millett, *Semper Fidelis*, 156.

included only the Marines. In the build-up to the American intervention, newspapers focused on the atrocities committed and the dire situation faced by American and other missionaries in China. The headlines read “Europeans Slain by the Boxers,” “More ‘Boxer’ Atrocities: Three Christian Families Massacred,” and by June 6, they read “Americans may be fighting in China: More American Marines Landed.”⁶² As news of the Corps’ landing and participation reached back to the U.S., the Marines’ presence dominated the headlines, and sensationalism ruled the day, something that sold papers and benefitted the growing reputation of the Marine Corps.

Newspapers like the *New York Herald* provided daily estimates of casualties and deaths as the conflict carried on. Throughout June, the Marines continued to add to their numbers, reaching their peak at nearly 500 Marines by the end of July.⁶³ The *Herald’s* headline of June 13, 1900 continued to reinforce the theme of David versus Goliath as it announced “Little Band of Marines Encounter Great Boxer Horde.”⁶⁴ While the Boxers certainly outnumbered the Marines, many of the Boxers believed themselves impervious to bullets, allowing the Marines and the other Western forces to fend off the Chinese as more reinforcements arrived.

The Marines also represented only a tiny portion of the large international force that arrived in China to quell the Boxer rebellion. Yet, as the first Americans ashore, and with the casualties they sustained, the Marines were lauded, and those who were killed

⁶² “Europeans Slain by the Boxers,” *New York Herald*, June 3, 1900; “More ‘Boxer’ Atrocities,” *Austin American-Statesman*, May 31, 1900; “Americans May Be Fighting in China,” *New York Herald*, June 6, 1900.

⁶³ Trevor K. Plante, “U.S. Marines in the Boxer Rebellion,” *Prologue Magazine of the National Archives* (Winter 1999, Vol. 31, No. 4).

⁶⁴ “Little Band of Marines Encounter Great Boxer Horde,” *New York Herald*, June 13, 1900.

were memorialized in papers across the country.⁶⁵ As the Marines and allied soldiers eliminated threats from Chinese snipers in the walls around Tientsin at great cost, the relief forces headed to Peking in early August 1900. Just as the large group of Western militaries, now termed the International Relief Force, arrived in Peking, however, the Chinese Manchu government sided with the Boxers, further reinforcing the city against the Western powers.⁶⁶ After over a week of quelling guerilla warfare around the city, the relief force finally broke through and liberated the Western legations on August 14, 1900.⁶⁷

The Corps' experience in China represents an example of the power of the press over the realities on the ground. As the Corps was the first to enter China, they were hailed as rescuers and liberators. Their success in combat, even against a relatively unorganized force, however, was subjective at best. The Corps suffered 39 casualties, including four Killed in Action. Thanks to the newspapers in America though, the drama of the intervention and the Corps' participation gained the Marines not only headlines during the battle, but yet another credential toward their public image as a battle-hardened and elite fighting force. The army and navy could only sit on the sidelines and watch as the Marines dominated the press and the national imagination.

Even as Marines continued occupation duty in China, there was a clear recognition within the American press that the Corps' participation was newsworthy and the Marine Corps sought, for the first time, to exploit that fact. In August 1900, an

⁶⁵ "Troops Defeat Chinese," *New Orleans Times-Picayune*, July 18, 1900. Marine Captain Austin R. Davis, who was killed in the Boxer Rebellion was memorialized with a drawing of his likeness and a biography in several newspapers across the country.

⁶⁶ Millett, *Semper Fidelis*, 157.

⁶⁷ Millett, *Semper Fidelis*, 163.

unattributed story about the history of the Marine Corps, one that spanned an entire page, was published all around the country. It was titled differently in most papers, including “Soldier and Sailor, Too,” “On Land and Sea,” and even “Uncle Sam’s Marines Are True Heroes.”⁶⁸ While the story is unattributed, it is reasonable to believe that the Marine Corps was behind it, marking an important milestone in which the Corps nationally distributed a story to its recruiting centers, who then got it in newspapers and in front of the public. In the *New Orleans Picayune*, the headline was “The Value of the Marine Corps.”⁶⁹ The last line of the article best identified its purpose for the Marines. The author concluded, “Since the outbreak of trouble in China, the Marines have been much in the public eye, and all their exploits have served to increase the reputation and popularity of the Corps.”⁷⁰

Newspapers continued to publish articles throughout 1900 and into 1901 that recognized the bravery of Marines in China. Works such as “Bravery on the Firing Line,” “Captain Leonard, USMC, is here,” “Letters from Tientsin,” “Bravery of Marines,” “Our Soldiers in China,” “High Praise for the Marines,” “In Fire Zone All Day,” “Gallantry of Americans,” and an article on the exploits of Boxer Rebellion hero Captain Smedley Butler, titled, “Home from the Wars,” never let the Corps’ heritage and lore out of the public imagination.⁷¹ In the Corps’ participation in the Boxer Rebellion, the Marines

⁶⁸ “Soldier and Sailor, Too,” *New York Tribune*, August 5, 1900; “On Land And Sea,” *Los Angeles Times*, August 21, 1900; “Uncle Sam’s Marines Are True Heroes,” *The Times* (Philadelphia), August 5, 1900.

⁶⁹ “The Value of the Marine Corps,” *New Orleans Times-Picayune*, August 12, 1900.

⁷⁰ “The Value of the Marine Corps,” *New Orleans Times-Picayune*, August 12, 1900.

⁷¹ “Bravery on the Firing Line,” *Washington Post*, September 11, 1900; “Captain Leonard, USMC, is here,” *Washington Post*, November 3, 1900; “Letters from Tientsin,” *Washington Post*, August 12, 1900; “Bravery of Marines,” *Washington Post*, September 9, 1900; “Our Soldiers in China,” *Washington Post*, November 30, 1900; “High Praise for the Marines,” *Washington Post*, October 5, 1900; “In Fire Zone All Day,” *Washington Post*, August 18, 1900; “Home From the Wars,” *Washington Post*, January 11, 1901; and “Gallantry of Americans,” *New York Times*, August 18, 1900.

created heroes, legends, and lore, which all continue to contribute to the Corps' public image today. Marines such as Dan Daly, John T. Myers, and Smedley Butler are still remembered today in Marine Corps training programs including both Recruit Training (boot camp) and Officer Candidates School (OCS).⁷²

The societal impact of the Marines' deployment in China was a powerful testament to the weight of the press, and pushed the Marines to consider control over their own story. Even though the Marines' role in China had been tiny, they burst into popular culture. Marines were melded into existing songs and poems of the early twentieth century. In 1901, the *Washington Post* reprinted a poem dedicated to the Marines, written by G.C. Reid in the *Georgetown College Journal*, entitled "'Billy Blue,' U.S. Marine." Its final verses demonstrated the change in the image of Marines since 1898:

Throw out your chest Billy Blue,
For there's medals on your chest Billy Blue,
And tho' you ain't the man to brag
You were never known to lag
In following the flag, Billy Blue
There were sixty of his comrades that went down with the *Maine*,
But he raised the flag in Cuba first of all;
He's been at it in Manila, and he's at it now again,
Out in China, where he opened up the "ball."
So it's: Strike up the band Billy Blue:
You're the finest in the land, Billy Blue,

⁷² United States Marine Corps, OCS Preparation Packet, Subject File: OCS, History Division, U.S. Marine Corps, Quantico Virginia.

For we all know where you've been,
On the wall of old Pekin
And in the trenches of Tientsin, Billy Blue.⁷³

Prior to this version, the poem referenced army and navy personnel on different topics. Clearly, the Marines gained a great deal of attention in the first two years of the twentieth century and would only continue to be instilled in American culture as the Marines participated in more interventions and police actions on behalf of American expansion.⁷⁴

In American music, the “President’s Own” United States Marine Corps Band also helped to keep the Corps in the press and to represent America itself. One of the most recognized bands in the American military, the “President’s Own’s” concerts regularly made the news wherever it played. In the late nineteenth century, former director John Philip Sousa made a name for the Corps with his enduring ragtime marches, and endeared the Corps’ band within the powerful Washington, D.C. circles.⁷⁵ The “President’s Own” band even represented the United States at the Paris Exhibition in 1900.⁷⁶ Although dress uniforms and theatre-like discipline often brought ridicule from other military services, the band captured national and international attention.⁷⁷

With an increase in both recruits and national attention after the Spanish-American War and the Boxer Rebellion, the Marine Corps appeared to be a service on the rise, certainly in the public’s estimation. However, the military establishment in general

⁷³ “‘Billy Blue’: U.S. Marine,” *Washington Post*, quoted from *Georgetown College Journal*, January 13, 1901.

⁷⁴ Heather Pace Marshall, “Crucible of Colonial Service: The Warrior Brotherhood and Mythos of the Modern Marine Corps, 1898-1934” (MA thesis, University of Hawaii, 2003), 35-36.

⁷⁵ Master Gunnery Sergeant D. Michael Ressler, USMC, *Historical Perspectives on The President’s Own U.S. Marine Band* (Washington, D.C.: Historical Branch, G-3 Division, Headquarters, U.S. Marine Corps, 1998), 16.

⁷⁶ “Belgian Honor for John Philip Sousa,” *New York Herald*, June 3, 1900.

⁷⁷ Ressler, *The President’s Own*, 17.

remained skeptical about the small service's roles. Having faced opponents to the Corps' survival as a part of the navy in the past and learned first-hand the power of the press, the Corps sought to direct that power for its own good. By turning to the public, the Corps circumvented the existing hierarchies of the military establishment. While it would seem that the Corps' small size might act as a deterrent to institutional change since it could not reach anywhere near the size of the other services, instead, its small size offered flexibility and exclusivity. There appeared to be a recognition amongst the Corps that if it could not petition the President, military, or Congress for funds to grow, it could craft its public image around its small size. By highlighting its history and combat record in newspapers and therefore going straight to the public, the Marine Corps crafted a public image that Marines were not merely regular soldiers, but instead a "corps d'elite:" a small, handpicked group of seagoing soldiers that saw action around the world while the army sat idle.

As agents of their own change in public image, the Marines mirrored the work of public relations men in the civilian world. Much like the first public relations pioneers in the early twentieth century, the Corps found its early success by using the newspapers.⁷⁸ Public relations experts like Edward Bernays got their start in journalism and the newspapers. These men were considered "news engineers," who could tap into the emotions of Americans and "get news through to the public."⁷⁹ With tactics like pushing articles about the history of the Marine Corps and touting its achievements, the Corps demonstrated an ability to control the information that reached the public, rather than

⁷⁸ Stuart Ewen, *PR!: A Social History of Spin* (New York: Basic Books, 1996), 76.

⁷⁹ Gerald Stanley Lee, *Crowds: A Study of the Genius of Democracy and of the Fears, Desires, and Expectations of the People* (London: Methuen & Co., 1913), 556-557.

react to it, which mirrored the development of public relations in the civilian world.

Bernays argued that facts that could become *news* were “any overt act which *juts out* of the routine of circumstance . . . interrupting the continuity of life in some way to bring about a response.”⁸⁰

In 1907, the first example of the institutionalization of Marine Corps publicity emerged with the development of a proactive publicity strategy at the Chicago Recruiting Station. This strategy involved a two-pronged approach in which the recruiters developed a “follow-up” system for all recruits and then press agents at the Chicago recruiting office wrote interesting and newsworthy articles in their respective hometown newspapers or in the *Chicago Tribune*.⁸¹ This system was put in place by the commanding officer of the Chicago Recruiting District at the time, Captain William C. Harllee. Captain Harllee was a graduate of the U.S. Military Academy at West Point and had served in the U.S. Army during the Spanish-American War. In 1900, Harllee was appointed a second lieutenant in the Marine Corps and saw service in the Philippines, Hawaii, and Cuba.⁸² In 1907, Harllee was ordered to Chicago by Major General Commandant George Elliott to “take charge of the Marine Corps Recruiting Office there and run an experimental operation.”⁸³

Prior to Captain Harllee’s arrival in Chicago, the newspaper recruiting strategy for the Marine Corps was unassuming and unambitious at best. As was typical at the time,

⁸⁰ Ewen, *PR!*, 18, emphasis added.

⁸¹ Gunnery Sergeant Clarence B. Proctor, “First Marine Corps Publicity Bureau,” *Recruiters’ Bulletin*, August 1920, 5.

⁸² Brigadier General William Curry Harllee, USMC, Biographical File, U.S. Marine Corps History Division, Quantico, VA.

⁸³ John Harllee, *The Marine from Manatee: A Tradition of Rifle Marksmanship* (Washington, DC: National Rifle Association of America, 1984), 118.

the ads for Marine recruits appeared in the “Help Wanted” section of the newspaper. In the February 7, 1907 *Chicago Tribune*, the Corps’ ad for recruits was four lines long. It read: “Men—For the U.S. Marine Corps. Between ages 19 and 35; an opportunity to see the world.” While the ad was in the first column of the newspaper, it was nearly three quarters of the way down the page and squeezed to between an ad for “Men—100 TALL YOUNG MEN TO APPEAR ON STAGE AT MCVICKER’S THEATRE” and “MEN—TO CUT ICE. JEFFERSON ICE CO.”⁸⁴ These advertisements ran roughly every other day in the same help wanted section. This was not unusual as the navy ran ads in the same section for their own recruiting purposes. In their ads, however, the navy clearly targeted a different audience. In the March 21, 1907 “Help Wanted” section of the *Chicago Tribune*, the navy placed an ad for “BOYS—OF GOOD PHYSIQUE AND CHARACTER.”⁸⁵

Why the navy chose to use “boys” instead of “men” is undetermined. While on the surface this may seem to be a way in which the Marine Corps appropriated “manhood” in order to show the difference between it and the other services, most likely there are other more practical strategies at play. In the *Chicago Tribune* at the time, the “Help Wanted” ads were categorized alphabetically based on the call itself. The “Male Help” section included ads for everything from coachmen to porters, janitors, and “strong men.” By starting their ad with the word “Boys,” the navy actually featured their ad first among all the ads at the top of the first column in that section. The navy’s ad also called for recruits from “ages 17 to 25,” while the Marine Corps’ ads sought recruits of “ages 19

⁸⁴ “Help Wanted,” *Chicago Tribune*, February 7, 1907.

⁸⁵ “Help Wanted,” *Chicago Tribune*, March 21, 1907.

to 35.”⁸⁶ As recruits under the age of 18 still needed parental permission at this time, perhaps the navy had to clarify its own call. Regardless, the ads prior to the Corps’ introduction of a “publicity bureau” in Chicago represented the generally lackluster and uninteresting type of “help wanted” theme that failed to stick out among the many other calls for work in the area.

Captain Harllee had an entirely different plan for the recruiting and publicity of Marines in Chicago. Lore has it that Harllee showed up at the Chicago recruiting office and “tossed at Gunnery Sergeant Clarence B. Proctor: ‘Sergeant, let’s get a story out to the press about a Marine running away with a beautiful blonde with exquisite curls.’ The Sergeant replied ‘I don’t know of any such, sir.’ Harllee retorted, ‘Let’s make one up. We can get a fake picture and call the Marine ‘old Chaw Brannon!’ Said Proctor, ‘What’s the point sir?’ Harllee, ‘Sergeant, you know perfectly well that nobody here has ever even heard of us. We’ve got to start to change that with this story. We can exploit the address of the office and draw attention to a picture of a hard-boiled old-timer in our eye-catching Marine Corps dress uniform. We can start the ball rolling to get some good recruits!’”⁸⁷ In Harllee’s biography, this drastic change in recruiting strategy was not necessarily an idea born out of Chicago, but instead an institutional change brought about by the Commandant of the Marine Corps. The author, Harllee’s son, Rear Admiral John Harllee, states, “General Elliott wanted to try something new—publicity...The general wanted to try out his plan in Chicago.”⁸⁸

⁸⁶ “Help Wanted,” *Chicago Tribune*, March 21, 1907.

⁸⁷ Harllee, *Marine from Manatee*, 120.

⁸⁸ Harllee, *Marine from Manatee*, 119.

Captain Harllee clearly did not mind blurring the lines between fact and fiction in Chicago, so long as he got the attention of potential recruits. His deep involvement with the publicity work in Chicago is clearly represented in the sheer amount of material he personally wrote in order to get the name of the Marine Corps out to the public. In a February, 1908 edition of the *Chicago Examiner*, under the headline “United States Marine Corps,” Harllee, a veteran of the army, wrote a response to an earlier editorial in which the author claimed the military service should be a school for men of questionable character. In his response, Captain Harllee artfully intertwined the lofty principles of the Marine Corps and the benefits it offered. Harllee even used language that is still used to this day in the Corps’ recruiting material, that becoming a Marine is something that is earned, not guaranteed. Harllee wrote, “In our service we have no such type as the “deleterious common soldier” nor do we view our men as common soldiers. On the contrary, we foster the idea that to be a United States Marine is something of which to be proud.”⁸⁹

The new publicity material generated by the Chicago recruiting district under Harllee was drastically different. Not only did Captain Harllee and Sergeant Clarence Proctor deliver less than accurate stories to the press, such as “a Baptist preacher who joined the Marines because he gets a better salary, considering food, lodging, and clothing.”⁹⁰ They also drew attention to the Marines with Harllee’s own combat experiences in the press. On August 12, 1907, the *Rock Island Argus* (Illinois) published an article about Harllee’s accomplishments. Titled “Comes Here From Cuba To Gather in

⁸⁹ Captain William C. Harllee, “United States Marine Corps,” *Chicago Examiner*, February 20, 1908.

⁹⁰ Harllee, *Marine from Manatee*, 121.

Recruits,” the article notes that Harllee “took a prominent part in the suppression of the insurrection which broke out in the island...about a year ago. It will be remembered that, as usual, the Marines were the first to be landed in the island when the trouble started and they held the island until the arrival of the army of pacification.”⁹¹ The end of the article mentions the names of the Rock Island men who were recruited into the Marines on that day as well.

Harllee’s strategy in Chicago was to add both exclusivity and elevation to the Corps’ recruiting material. Much like the editorial written by Harllee, a *Chicago Tribune* article from May 9, 1908 quoted Harllee as saying “Most of the men we have enlisted here have been young men from business offices; our requirements are strict and none but an intelligent man can fulfill them. A Marine is not only a sea soldier but he must be a naval gunner, a field artilleryman, and some times (sic) a horse Marine.”⁹² In *The Dispatch* of Moline, Illinois, an article ran which showed that not all applicants become Marines. With the headline “Reject 14 Out of 17 Who Apply to Enlist,” the article highlighted the high failure rate of recruits from Moline and Rock Island. Reasons for their failure to join the Marines included bad eyesight, color blindness, physically unfit, and under age.”⁹³

Along with Harllee’s strategy of elevation and exclusivity, the Chicago Recruiting District also enacted a program called the “Follow-Up Book.” The “Follow-Up Book” was a log of all the recruits in the district who came and joined the Marines. Sergeant Proctor explained that “on the day men enlisted their names were alphabetically

⁹¹ “Comes Here From Cuba to Gather in Recruits,” *Rock Island Argus*, August 12, 1907.

⁹² “Seeks Clerks As Marines; New Move by Recruiter,” *Chicago Tribune*, May 9, 1908.

⁹³ “Reject 14 Out of 17 Who Apply to Enlist,” *The Dispatch*, September 4, 1907.

entered...together with any pertinent opinions or distinguishing remarks regarding them.”⁹⁴ That list would then be sent to the posts and ships of the Marine Corps and navy with an endorsement from Commandant Elliott, and the commanding officers would return comment on those Marines’ development and service in the period since their enlistment.

The “follow-up” book is the example of the Corps tying itself into communities, a strategy that will be used continuously through World War II. When the Chicago Recruiting District received replies from the Marines’ commanding officers, the information would be used for two different purposes. The first was as “newspaper items,” in other words, “used in the preparation of newspaper releases for the press of the man’s home town.” Sergeant Proctor found that these clippings were “almost without exception published,” alongside a “brief paragraph setting forth the advantages in the Marine Corps for travel, promotion, rifle shooting, athletic sports, and special details...with the address of the local recruiting office.”⁹⁵ The second purpose of gathering these remarks, according to Proctor, was to answer queries from relatives or friends of the Marine. “Relatives and friends were always favorable impressed with the fact that the recruiting officer was able to furnish this information and that he was enough interested in the men he enlisted to follow their career.”⁹⁶ The “Follow-Up Book” system was an intuitive and highly successful method of using existing information (recruits) and

⁹⁴ Gunnery Sergeant Clarence B. Proctor, “First Marine Corps Publicity Bureau,” *Recruiters’ Bulletin*, August 1920, 5.

⁹⁵ Gunnery Sergeant Clarence B. Proctor, “First Marine Corps Publicity Bureau,” *Recruiters’ Bulletin*, August 1920, 5.

⁹⁶ Gunnery Sergeant Clarence B. Proctor, “First Marine Corps Publicity Bureau,” *Recruiters’ Bulletin*, August 1920, 5.

turning them into human interest stories for recruiting. This strategy would not be lost with the Chicago Recruiting District, but would later be used in the Second World War on a national level in the form of “Joe Blow” stories.

Even as Captain Harlee developed a successful publicity strategy in Chicago, the Marines faced a significant institutional threat to their existence from within the military establishment. The Corps’ quick rise in the media coincided with suspicion on the part of government leaders of its corresponding political power, especially in Washington, D.C. President Theodore Roosevelt “felt that the Corps had inordinate influence on policy-making, an influence heightened by the patronage appointment of new officers since 1898.”⁹⁷ President Roosevelt decided that because of the power the Marine Corps wielded through its self-promotion to the public it needed a reduction in size and mission so that it was clear that the Corps was a subordinate service to the navy.⁹⁸

As the Marine Corps enjoyed largely positive press coverage in the first decade of the twentieth century, a foe from the late nineteenth century would help to define the Corps’ future. In the late 1880s, a group of determined anti-Marine Corps naval officers, led by Commander William F. Fullam, sought to have the Marines removed from the ships of the navy. While those attempts were stymied by Congressional action, the core belief by these naval officers continued to surface as the naval political power structures changed over the following decade. In President Theodore Roosevelt, however, the aptly-named “Fullamites” found a powerful individual favorable to their goals. In the waning months of President Roosevelt’s tenure, Marines’ worst fears came to life as the Corps

⁹⁷ Millett, *Semper Fidelis*, 139.

⁹⁸ Millett, *Semper Fidelis*, 139.

was stricken from the ships of the navy on November 12, 1908, through Executive Order 969. This rarely discussed event in the Corps' history actually played a pivotal role in the timeline of the Corps' public relations renaissance prior to the First World War. While the other services attended to their public image only as the First World War acted as a catalyst, this real threat to the Marine Corps' existence acted as an early warning to the service. The choice for the Marine Corps at that time was clear: establish a definitive purpose in the military establishment and make sure the public is informed, or potentially get rolled into the U.S. Army.

The Marine Corps' path toward this Congressional stand-off started nearly thirty years previous. The argument of the Fullamites in the 1880s was that the presence of Marines on board ships created a second class of men within the ranks and therefore inefficiencies of operation. Fullam argued that this was the case since the Marines were largely American citizens, and much of the naval ranks were actually non-citizens who had joined to attain citizenship.⁹⁹ The Marines, then, in their position aboard the ship as guards and policemen, led many sailors to distrust and separate themselves from the Marines. This, according to Fullam and some other influential naval officers, created an inefficiency aboard the ship. Fullam further argued that sailors aboard the ship could easily take up the tasks heretofore performed by the Marines. In his original argument, made in 1890, then Lieutenant Fullam even went as far as to declare, "the fact that other navies kept Marines afloat for similar duties only proved the point...that such an

⁹⁹ LtCol John G. Miller, "William Freeland Fullam's War with the Corps," *U.S. Naval Institute Proceedings*, November 1975, 38.

arrangement was acceptable only to men raised ‘under the monarchical forms of Europe.’”¹⁰⁰

Commander Fullam argued that, since the Marines were considered naval infantry, their service should be conducted independently from the capital ships of the navy, and they should instead travel to the fight in separate transport ships. As a member of the growing group of progressive thinking naval officers, Fullam believed the reasons for this change emanated from the natural progression of technological change aboard the ship. No longer were sailors in the era of the sailing ship, when the Marines were seen as necessary to keep order and act as sharpshooters. The “new navy” was a world of steel and oil. Sailors had to be trained in engineering and other more educated roles, thus reducing the need for a shipboard police force.

While the Marine Corps survived Fullam’s attacks of the 1890s, the Roosevelt Administration proved to be a serious challenge to the Corps’ existence. The duration of President Theodore Roosevelt’s administration was a time of instability and upheaval for the civil-military relationship.¹⁰¹ Roosevelt sought to expand his executive power during this period, especially as it pertained to military matters. More than most American presidents before him, Roosevelt understood the burgeoning power of the press and publicity and his presidency coincided with one of the most significant periods in American journalism. With a keen understanding of the power of press and an agenda to strengthen his position as Commander and Chief, Roosevelt often intervened in matters

¹⁰⁰ LtCol John G. Miller, “William Freeland Fullam’s War with the Corps,” *U.S. Naval Institute Proceedings*, November 1975, 38.

¹⁰¹ Matthew M. Oyos, “Theodore Roosevelt, Congress, and the Military: U.S. Civil-Military Relations in the Early Twentieth Century,” *Presidential Studies Quarterly*, Vol. 30, No. 2, (June 2000): 312.

of military importance, often without notice to Congress or the public. Historian Matthew Oyos argues that Roosevelt represented the new generation in American military and politics; the generation that did not know the Civil War, but fought in the Spanish-American War. In this position, Roosevelt also intervened in the promotion of younger officers (of his generation) over the older officers who had fought so long to achieve their rank in such a slow system.¹⁰²

Within this tense climate, the young upstart progressive officers of the navy finally managed to exert their influence to achieve the removal of Marines from the ships of the line through the use of Roosevelt's growing executive power. Sympathetic with the still active Commander Fullam were naval officers Commander William S. Sims and Rear Admiral John E. Pillsbury. In 1908, the Fullamites together engaged President Roosevelt and his Secretary of the Navy Victor H. Metcalf in an assault on the Corps' shipboard detachments.¹⁰³ In the first memorandum, delivered to the President by Commander Sims, the Fullamites complained of the Marine Commandant, Major General George Elliott's undue political power in protecting the Corps from the move for so long as they had. Every time the removal was proposed, argued Sims, "General Elliott goes to the Secretary and successfully combats the proposition."¹⁰⁴ Through these inroads, as well as other more informal hints to the president, the Fullamites finally succeeded in

¹⁰² Matthew M. Oyos, "Theodore Roosevelt, Congress, and the Military: U.S. Civil-Military Relations in the Early Twentieth Century," *Presidential Studies Quarterly*, Vol. 30, No. 2, (June 2000): 313.

¹⁰³ Jack Shulimson and Graham Cosmas, "Teddy Roosevelt and the Corps' Seagoing Mission," *Marine Corps Gazette* (November 1981), 55.

¹⁰⁴ Jack Shulimson and Graham Cosmas, "Teddy Roosevelt and the Corps' Seagoing Mission," *Marine Corps Gazette* (November 1981), 55.

motivating Secretary Metcalf to bring the proposition up at a cabinet meeting at which time President Roosevelt approved of the action.¹⁰⁵

Major General George F. Elliott was appointed Commandant of the Marine Corps in 1903 by President Roosevelt. There has been little scholarly attention focused on General Elliott's commandancy and even the Marine Corps in general during this period. Historian Allan Millett argues that, while Elliott demonstrated his competence as a Marine field commander in places like Cuba, Korea, and Panama, he otherwise had an "undistinguished career."¹⁰⁶ Unlike future commandants Major Generals George Barnett and John Lejeune, Elliott also "had difficulty coping with the politicians in Congress, the Navy Department, and his own staff."¹⁰⁷ Ultimately, Elliott was a traditionalist. As commandant, Elliott largely failed to adapt the Corps' mission and doctrine to fit into the expansion and increased action Marines saw throughout his terms. As such, Elliott firmly believed in the Corps' role aboard the ships of the navy, and the threat to remove the seagoing Marines, Elliott believed, was a threat to the Corps' existence.¹⁰⁸

Elliott's initial reaction to the proposal by the Fullamites was one of mild support. Perhaps Elliott may have known this mission was actually a glimpse into the future of the Marine Corps. The commandant is quoted saying it would be "the making of the Marine Corps."¹⁰⁹ Among the newest arguments of the Fullamites in front of Secretary Metcalf and President Roosevelt, was that the Corps had proved quite successful in the Spanish-

¹⁰⁵ Jack Shulimson and Graham Cosmas, "Teddy Roosevelt and the Corps' Seagoing Mission," *Marine Corps Gazette* (November 1981), 55.

¹⁰⁶ Millett, *Semper Fidelis*, 136.

¹⁰⁷ Millett, *Semper Fidelis*, 136-137.

¹⁰⁸ Millett, *Semper Fidelis*, 137.

¹⁰⁹ Jack Shulimson and Graham Cosmas, "Teddy Roosevelt and the Corps' Seagoing Mission," *Marine Corps Gazette* (November 1981), 57.

American War, Cuba, Panama, the Philippines and elsewhere as an individual fighting force. Part of the Corps' success was also defined by the fact that these were large units, transported in their own navy ships, to the place of action. These Marines were, for the most part, not ship's detachments aboard the navy's ships of the line. Amongst the public, tensions ran high over the proposal. An editorial in the *New York Times* on November 20, 1908, conveyed that "enlisted men in Newport have deemed it so little necessary to disguise their joy at getting rid of their unloved shipmates that they have addressed a letter of gratitude and approval to the President for the course to be taken."¹¹⁰

At the time, however, the Marine Corps did not have the protection of a powerful identity in front of the public that it achieved with the First World War. Instead, the drastic change to the Corps' mission shook the Marine establishment, and "rumors circulated in Washington that Marine officers were organizing to lobby Congress for reversal of Roosevelt's decision."¹¹¹ Elliott even reversed his original support and released a statement that such an activity would be contrary to the Corps' motto and that he forbid it from taking place.¹¹² Unfortunately, that choice was not his alone.

It is possible that the Marine Corps did not have enough political clout at this time to reverse a decision by a politically powerful, albeit outgoing, President, if not for the intervention of army Major General Leonard Wood. Early in the controversy over Roosevelt's executive order, General Wood inserted himself into the discussion by meeting with Roosevelt over the matter and voicing his favor for the removal of the

¹¹⁰ "Unpleasant for Marines," *New York Times*, November 20, 1908.

¹¹¹ Jack Shulimson and Graham Cosmas, "Teddy Roosevelt and the Corps' Seagoing Mission," *Marine Corps Gazette* (November 1981), 58.

¹¹² Jack Shulimson and Graham Cosmas, "Teddy Roosevelt and the Corps' Seagoing Mission," *Marine Corps Gazette* (November 1981), 58.

Marines. The caveat to Wood's plan was that he believed the Marines should then be transferred to the army. Once rumors spread of General Wood's overture to Roosevelt (and subsequent rumors that Roosevelt also favored the idea), the Marine Corps and its supporters revolted over the idea. Elliott would later recall, "While we had been following quietly our duties, elimination and absorption were casting unknown to us their shadows at our heels."¹¹³

The Wood intervention tremendously complicated the navy's original proposal. While the Fullamites sincerely believed that Marines should not be aboard the ships of the navy, the group of naval officers never intended to have the Marines separated from the navy in full. Certainly, the navy saw the importance of its traditional connection with the Marines and even the Fullamites recognized the importance of the Marines as an expeditionary force for American interventionism. A full removal would also have a devastating effect on the navy's budget and personnel allotments, both of which were often slightly pilfered from the Marine Corps' allocation.

The fight over Executive Order 969 began in December 1908 in Congress with the House Naval Affairs Committee. As rumors of General Wood's proposal created a heightened political environment, the Fullamites, represented by Admiral Pillsbury began the hearings on the defensive. Instead of strengthening the argument for removal of the Marines on ships, Pillsbury needed to make sure the navy's position on Wood's proposal

¹¹³ Jack Shulimson and Graham Cosmas, "Teddy Roosevelt and the Corps' Seagoing Mission," *Marine Corps Gazette* (November 1981), 58.

was clear. The admiral stated “I think that it will be a very great mistake to put them in the Army. We want them in the Navy. We do not want them on board ship.”¹¹⁴

As the controversy moved into a House Naval Affairs Subcommittee in January 1909, the Marines also gained an edge over the hearings with the introduction of Congressman Thomas H. Butler, father of celebrated Marine Smedley Butler. In the transcript of the hearings it is clear that the Marines had support, not only from the other Marines in the room but also from the subcommittee members themselves. Secretary of the Navy Truman H. Newberry had replaced former Secretary Metcalf and was clearly not prepared for the tenacity of the anti-navy sentiment. Congressman Butler, as Acting Chairman, took Secretary Newberry to task for the decision of his predecessor and did not allow him to shirk questions he thought were softballs.

Early on in the hearing, Butler asked Newberry, “Do you know whether during all that time [the Corps’ existence] they [Marines] have been detached from their ships as an organization or as a corps?” Newberry replied, “I do not. I would rather have you ask the General here [Elliott] as to that.” General Elliott dutifully answered in the negative, but Butler did not let Newberry off the hook. Butler continued, “I thought perhaps you would know from the history of the Corps?” Newberry doubled down and answered “I do not know. I would say that the General informs me they were detached for a short time and then put back.” Congressman Richmond P. Hobson, clearly irritated by Newberry’s non-

¹¹⁴ Jack Shulimson and Graham Cosmas, “Teddy Roosevelt and the Corps’ Seagoing Mission,” *Marine Corps Gazette* (November 1981), 58.

answers, finally quipped “Is it your idea that we should ask someone else about the history of the Corps, Mr. Secretary?”¹¹⁵

The hearings continued through February. While in the House, the committee hearings were decidedly localized to the relationship between the Marine Corps and the navy. The Wood intervention kept the Fullamites from making strong arguments about the removal of Marines as committee members continuously forced the naval officers to repeat their support for the Marines to continue with the navy at all. The cost of the removal (and subsequent increase in personnel for the navy to cover the missing Marines) was also constantly at issue. Roosevelt, however, was able to pressure members of the House committees, and supporters of the Marines were unable to stop a naval appropriations bill from passing without an amendment reversing Roosevelt’s executive order.¹¹⁶

In the Senate, the hearings were largely defined by the perception that Roosevelt had overstepped his own presidential powers with this serious alteration to the military establishment. The chairman of the Senate Naval Affairs Committee, Senator Eugene Hale, was a staunch Roosevelt opponent and the issue at hand was tossed out and officially removed from the Naval Appropriations bill as Roosevelt ultimately conceded in favor of other naval issues. On March 1, 1909, the naval appropriation bill was passed with an amendment to reverse executive order 969 and return Marines to the fleet. Incoming President Howard Taft, unlike Roosevelt, sought to create a more subservient

¹¹⁵ “The Status of the Marine Corps,” Hearings before the subcommittee on Naval Academy and Marine Corps, Committee on Naval Affairs, House of Representatives, January 9, 1909, 11.

¹¹⁶ Jack Shulimson and Graham Cosmas, “Teddy Roosevelt and the Corps’ Seagoing Mission,” *Marine Corps Gazette* (November 1981), 59-60.

Presidency to Congressional power and stated publicly that Congress should define the Corps' role and not the president.¹¹⁷

With the Marines returned to the ships of the navy, the Corps dodged what many perceived to be a real threat to service's existence. It would not be long, however, before the Marines did embrace a complete change in their role within the navy, as an expeditionary and advanced base force. The presence of Marines detachments aboard the fighting ships of the navy, however, would not end until 1998. In the aftermath of the debacle with Roosevelt and the neo-Fullamites, the Marine Corps took organizational steps to formalize the publicity strategies it had begun in Chicago in 1907.

Seeking to codify and institutionalize the work begun in Chicago, in 1911, the Marine Corps created a Publicity Bureau to be located in New York City with the purpose of serving all Marine Corps recruiting districts. In November of that year, Captain Harold C. Snyder took command of the newly created Marine Corps Publicity Bureau.¹¹⁸ Ultimately, the Publicity Bureau served two purposes. The first, was as a repository for former journalists and news-savvy Marines to help create and strategize material to manage the Corps' public image and find recruits. The second was as a massive printing press to distribute materials to the recruiting districts. For the second purpose, the Corps supplied "a multi-graph for the printing of circulars, an envelope-addressing machine, and a filing case that held 7,500 address stencils."¹¹⁹ The Marine Corps Publicity Bureau had six sections, which included administrative, printing,

¹¹⁷ Jack Shulimson and Graham Cosmas, "Teddy Roosevelt and the Corps' Seagoing Mission," *Marine Corps Gazette* (November 1981), 61.

¹¹⁸ "The Publicity Bureau: Its Equipment and Activities," *Recruiters' Bulletin*, February 1917, 1.

¹¹⁹ Lindsay, *High Name*, 10.

bindery, photographic multigraph, and press departments. It was in the press department where Marines wrote and crafted news stories to deliver to newspapers looking to fill space.¹²⁰

Building on the Chicago strategies, the Marine Corps Publicity Bureau distributed weekly news stories regarding interesting and newsworthy happenings throughout the Corps. The themes often included broad topics like the Corps' battle history and famous Marines, but it also included small and seemingly insignificant stories that were written to grab the public's attention, usually with humor. It was important for the Marines, based on the lessons learned in Chicago, that these stories not seem like advertisements, but instead looked like normal news stories. An example of this can be seen in a *New York Times* article from February 22, 1912. The story, titled "Girl, Disguised, Tried to Enlist," tells the story of a young woman who disguised herself in an attempt to get deployed to China to join her sweetheart Marine.¹²¹ Another article printed in the *New York Times* told the story of a Marine whose uncle pledged him \$77,000 of his inheritance only if he re-enlisted in the Corps.¹²² It is unknown whether these stories held any truth, however, the Marines recognized that these stories were easy to create and were widely accepted by newspapers in order fill space.

With the creation of the Publicity Bureau and the Corps' experience with working the newspapers following the Roosevelt removal, the Marines arguably received another boost in the public eye with the foreign policies of the new administration under

¹²⁰ "The Publicity Bureau: Its Equipment and Activities," *Recruiters' Bulletin*, February 1917, 15.

¹²¹ "Girl, Disguised, Tries to Enlist," *New York Times*, February 22, 1912.

¹²² "\$77,000 If He Reenlists," *New York Times*, May 12, 1912.

President Woodrow Wilson.¹²³ Under the banner of progressive diplomacy, President Wilson believed that the American government and military should play an important role in social reform, especially in countries where it was believed, however paternalistically, that the people need America's help to overcome civil war and internal strife. Ultimately, President Wilson intervened in seven different countries during his presidency, all of which were spearheaded by the Marines, bringing the Corps again to the pages of American newspapers, while stories concerning their sister services languished.¹²⁴ A brief discussion of the Corps' actions in these countries and the resulting headlines help to understand how the Marines were represented to the public during this period. It is also important to note that during this period the Corps also emphasized to potential recruits that joining the Marine Corps meant that one could immediately see action. Wilson's policies and the Corps' participation in interventionism certainly made this possible.

A revolution brewing in Mexico at the start of Wilson's presidency marked the first time the president would deploy the Marines as an international police force. In 1914, American-backed Mexican leaders were deposed, which resulted in fighting from Mexico into Texas, including the kidnapping of American sailors at the port of Vera Cruz. These kidnappings were the last straw for Wilson and provided a publicly

¹²³ The relationship between the Wilson Administration and the U.S. Marine Corps is in need of serious scholarly study. During Wilson's presidency, with the help of Secretary of the Navy Josephus Daniels and Congressman Thomas Butler (father of Smedley Butler), the Marine Corps gained serious lobbying power with both Congress and the President. There is a clear surge in political power for the Marine Corps during this period, and a comprehensive study of the origins and outcomes of that political power is beyond the scope of this research, yet still remains of serious importance to the Marine Corps' rise in political spheres.

¹²⁴ Frederick Calhoun, *Power and Principle: Armed Intervention in Wilsonian Foreign Policy* (Kent, OH: Kent State University Press, 1986), 2.

supported cause for American forces to topple the new government in Mexico.¹²⁵ On April 20, 1914, Marines landed in Mexico at Vera Cruz. The Mexicans did not resist the landing of Marines and sailors as they landed on the beaches, however, guerilla attacks and sniper fire in the city made the operation perilous, forcing Marines into urban fighting, clearing houses street by street.¹²⁶ On April 22, the Marine contingent in Mexico reached a strength of 2,500. Successful in their mission, the Marines occupied bases in Vera Cruz and eventually departed Mexico with four dead and thirteen wounded. In an unattributed article (though most likely crafted by Marines), the *Washington Post* noted that the Corps' action in Mexico reinforced the fact that the service was "always called upon to form the entering wedge, to blaze the trail in landing on foreign shores."¹²⁷

On July 28, 1915, an uprising in Port-au-Prince, Haiti led the Marines into an intervention that would last decades and have a significant long-term impact, at times positive and others negative, on the Corps' public image. President Wilson ordered the newly created Marine Expeditionary Brigade, a flexible and deployment-ready unit of Marines, to Haiti, led by Colonel Littleton W.T. Walker and Major Smedley Butler.¹²⁸ Unlike the Corps' mostly military intervention in Mexico, the U.S. sought to control Haiti's financial, political, and police establishments through the Corps' intervention. President Wilson also demanded a new democratic election to be held in Haiti, with the ballots guarded by U.S. Marines.¹²⁹ A Marine-controlled military police called the

¹²⁵ Millett, *Semper Fidelis*, 171-173.

¹²⁶ Millett, *Semper Fidelis*, 173.

¹²⁷ "Marines Always to Fore," *Washington Post*, May 18, 1914.

¹²⁸ Millett, *Semper Fidelis*, 185.

¹²⁹ Millett, *Semper Fidelis*, 186.

Haitian Constabulary Police Force was also created under the leadership of Smedley Butler.

The majority of these actions were portrayed in the American media in the language of a return to civility, led by the orderly Marine Corps. A *Washington Post* article published on July 29, 1915, announced “U.S. Marines Halt Chaos in Haiti.”¹³⁰ In September of that year, Marines again appeared in the *Washington Post*, with the headline “Haiti Rebels Repulsed: American Marines Attack and Rout Revolutionary Band.”¹³¹ While leading the Haitian Constabulary Force, Smedley Butler received the Medal of Honor, further reinforcing his position as one of the Corps’ legends. While the Corps’ actions in Haiti would bring negative attention after the First World War, in this early stage of the intervention, the Marines were hailed as humanitarians. While this represented only the beginning of the Corps’ long future in Haiti, it started with mostly positive public reaction and the Corps benefited from the media’s coverage of actions there.

The “chaos” however, was not limited to one half of the island of Hispaniola. Soon after the American intervention in Haiti, the Marines were deployed to Santo Domingo. On May 15, 1916, two more Marine Expeditionary Brigades were landed to support U.S. government interests on that half of the island. As with Haiti, the American press provided coverage of this intervention and portrayed the Marines as heroic civilizers of a chaotic nation. Soon after the Marines landed, the revolutionary

¹³⁰ “U.S. Marines Halt Chaos in Haiti,” *Washington Post*, July 29, 1915.

¹³¹ “Haiti Rebels Repulsed,” *Washington Post*, September 26, 1915.

government fled and the Corps took control. The Dominicans rebelled against the new U.S. military government and the Marines took action to quell the riots.¹³²

As with all Marine Corps interventions to this date, the story, as it was told in the States, nearly always favored the Americans and was considered in the paternalistic and xenophobic, language of the day. Nevertheless, the Marine Corps as an institution benefited from this language and the portrayal of Marines as conquerors or civilizers of lesser nations. The *Washington Post* on June 7, cited “Americans Win Battle Against Arias’ Forces Without Losing a Man,” in which the individual bravery of Marines in Santo Domingo was highlighted along with their success in quelling the rebellion.¹³³ Throughout 1915, the newspapers published articles about the Marines in Santo Domingo, assuring their service would not leave the minds of the American public. Articles such as “Marines Are Rewarded,” and “Dominican Army Revolt is Crushed,” continued to portray the actions of the Marine Corps with a martial, and at the same time, democratic spirit.¹³⁴ Articles such as these allowed the Marine Corps to continue to reinforce their combat history and (newly found) importance within the military establishment as America’s police force.

In the midst of the Corps’ expeditionary duty to Mexico, Haiti, and Santo Domingo, the officer in charge of the Publicity Bureau, Major A.S. McLemore, founded a Marine Corps periodical dedicated to helping recruiting stations across the country craft their own news articles and gain more recruits called *The Recruiters’ Bulletin*. Historian

¹³² Millett, *Semper Fidelis*, 192.

¹³³ “U.S. Troops Defeat Dominican Rebels,” *Washington Post*, June 7, 1916.

¹³⁴ “Marines Are Rewarded,” *Washington Post*, November 5, 1916; “Dominican Army Revolt is Crushed,” *Washington Post*, October 7, 1916.

Robert Lindsay best sums up the *Bulletin's* dual purpose as internal press agent and recruiter when he said “the Marines of the Publicity Bureau were not only interested in attracting enlistees but also in that prime aim of every public relations practitioner: getting the name of your institution before the public in a favorable light.”¹³⁵ On the *Bulletin's* masthead was described its purpose as “in the Interest of the Recruiting Service of the U.S. Marine Corps.”¹³⁶ Captain L.P. Pinkston was the *Bulletin's* first editor and under his leadership, the publication opened a dialogue between the Corps' Publicity Bureau in New York and Marine recruiters around the country. The Publicity Bureau published the *Bulletin* monthly from 1914 until 1922 arguably some of the most important years for the development of the Marine Corps, both in its public image as well as its military mission.

Much like the *Marine Corps Gazette*, the army's *Infantry Journal* or the Navy's *Proceedings*, the *Recruiters' Bulletin* was a trade journal of sorts for Marine recruiting and publicity. The monthly published *Bulletin* generally ranged between 15 and 40 pages and during its eight-year run from 1914-1922 featured several regular authors and special features. The *Bulletin* not only generated short stories for the newspaper, but it also fostered a dialogue between the Corps' recruiting personnel around the country. The *Bulletin* included sections like “With the *Bulletin's* Correspondents,” that offered a space where recruiters discussed recruiting strategies of the day. Officers and enlisted alike also told their stories of success and failure in recruiting Marines.¹³⁷ Another benefit of the *Recruiters' Bulletin* was in its ability to act a repository for institutional knowledge. As

¹³⁵ Lindsay, *This High Name*, 13.

¹³⁶ *Recruiters' Bulletin*, November 1914, 1.

¹³⁷ “With the *Bulletin's* Correspondents,” *Recruiters' Bulletin*, November 1917, 21.

recruiting duty in the Marine Corps was often a short stint on rotation, new recruiters could always look toward the *Bulletin* for the knowledge needed to get a head start in their new recruiting duty. Another popular section of the *Bulletin*, called “Odds and Ends from Musty Files,” brought stories of lore and legends from the Corps’ past to recruiters, not only as a learning tool for Marines, but also to act as small stories for local newspapers. First introduced in 1916, the “Musty Files” section used archival research to discuss the history of recruiting going as far back as the late eighteenth century.¹³⁸ In 1920, the “Musty Files” section was picked up by Edwin McClellan, who was the first head of the Marine Corps Historical Division.¹³⁹

In 1916, five years after the Corps stood up its own Publicity Bureau, the army and the navy also created publicity and recruiting focused organizations and publications. To reflect the introduction of these services, in June 1916, the *Recruiters’ Bulletin* added a section called “With the Other Fellow: And His Work in the Recruiting Field,” which reported on developments of the army and navy in the field of recruiting. For army recruiting news, the *Bulletin* first cited a 1916 army publication called the *Pacific Coast Recruiter*, which in many ways mimicked the Corps’ own *Bulletin*, though it was only cited for a few months, before the *Bulletin* switched to reprinting “Army matter gleaned from various sources.”¹⁴⁰ “With the Other Fellow” also reported on developments from the navy’s newly created Publicity Bureau.¹⁴¹ While short lived (the navy introduced a different department called the Navy News Bureau in 1917), the Navy Publicity Bureau

¹³⁸ Albert E. Smith, “Odds and Ends from Musty Files,” *Recruiters’ Bulletin*, April 1916, 15.

¹³⁹ Edwin McClellan, “Odds and Ends from Musty Files,” *Recruiters’ Bulletin*, March 1920.

¹⁴⁰ “With the Other Fellow: And His Work in the Recruiting Field,” *Recruiters’ Bulletin*, September 1916, 6.

¹⁴¹ “With the Other Fellow: And His Work in the Recruiting Field,” *Recruiters’ Bulletin*, June 1916, 10.

was a printing press and small publicity department much like the Corps' own. Through the Corps' *Bulletin*, it is evident that the navy's Publicity Bureau released a weekly bulletin with input in regards to recruiting for the navy.¹⁴²

In general, the *Bulletin* reprinted stories that were helpful to the Corps' own publicity and recruiting efforts as well as news about how each service developed or distributed its material. These pieces rarely had a competitive air about them and were often supportive of the efforts of the other services. In September 1916, the *Bulletin* noted, "The Army recruiting service is distributing a pamphlet in which the experiences of a Columbus, Ohio newspaper man, who went through the formality of enlistment and training at the Recruit Depot, are set forth at length. It is good reading and should add greatly to the Army's literature."¹⁴³ In the same month's column, the writers at the *Bulletin* laid out a specific problem the navy had encountered with recruiting based on the numbers released that month. The navy Publicity Bureau firmly believed there was a labor shortage or some type of similar issue in several different cities since those large population centers "had but one applicant per week for the period of one month."¹⁴⁴ This, of course, was also information that Marine recruiters could use to help boost efforts in those specific population centers in order to make up for lost recruits.

For the average recruiter across the country, the *Recruiters' Bulletin* included a section called "Our Press Department," which printed the responses and opinions of local

¹⁴² "With the Other Fellow: And His Work in the Recruiting Field," *Recruiters' Bulletin*, June 1916, 10. It is unclear as to whether this bulletin was published only in the New York area or had a wider distribution. Articles reprinted in the *Recruiters' Bulletin* often came from organizations in the New York boroughs.

¹⁴³ "With the Other Fellow: And His Work in the Recruiting Field," *Recruiters' Bulletin*, September 1916, 6.

¹⁴⁴ "With the Other Fellow: And His Work in the Recruiting Field," *Recruiters' Bulletin*, September 1916, 6.

newspaper editors about the performance and usefulness of Marine recruiting literature and methods. These responses essentially represented a monthly unsolicited satisfaction survey of the Corps' public image management. At the header of each "Our Press Department," the *Bulletin's* editors explained the importance of the high-quality copy distributed by the Corps' Publicity Bureau:

Once upon a time, a city editor told a reporter that a good newspaper man could write the story of the crucifixion of Christ in half a column. And that is the idea our Press Department is carrying out. The stuff sent out by our press department is winning space and finding favor for one reason—it does not have to go into the rewrite. It is already put up in newspaper shape and editors everywhere seem glad to get it. Now and then a story comes back telling us to send it to the billboard man, but on the other hand, we have dozens of letters from editors, entirely unsolicited, complimenting us on the work.¹⁴⁵

If the *Bulletin's* editors are to be taken at their word regarding the fact that these letters are unsolicited, this praise is evidence of the Corps' success in actively crafting its public image through the American press.

The first run of the column, which included responses from editors in California, Illinois, Oregon, Ohio, and Wisconsin, highlighted perhaps the most important advantages the Corps had over any competition for space in the papers: quality writing and newsworthiness. The editor of the *Journal* from Quincy, Illinois wrote, "We want to express our appreciation of the inclosed (sic) and other good stuff we have lately received, and to say that we will always be able to find space for stories so cleverly written and so abundant in humor and human interest as this."¹⁴⁶ Another piece, from the

¹⁴⁵ "Our Press Department," *Recruiters' Bulletin*, June 1916, 11.

¹⁴⁶ "Our Press Department," *Recruiters' Bulletin*, June 1916, 11.

editor of the *Statesman* in Portland, Oregon, used similar language: “Your stuff is good. It has more fizz and human interest than 98 percent of the press agent dope that comes through the mail.”¹⁴⁷

The editors of the *Recruiters' Bulletin* were so thrilled with the response from these local newspaper editors that they next actively solicited responses from the even more editors for more details about what they were doing right and if they could improve upon their current methods. The questions posed to the editors included, “Are you using these stories? What do you think of the service we are sending you and how could we improve it?”¹⁴⁸ The *Bulletin* received a stunning response from the editors. By August 1916, nearly 1100 had responded, and by the Bureau’s own calculations, “about eighty-five percent of the replies were very favorable, and the other fifteen percent were quite the opposite.”¹⁴⁹ Positive responses included one from the *New York Herald*, which stated, “We use them. Interesting incidents serve our purpose best, yours too, I should think.”¹⁵⁰

The *Bulletin* included a large number of the replies to its survey in its August 1916 issue, and while most included were favorable, the ones that were not revealed that some newspapers saw through the Corps’ folksy and humorous stories for the purpose they ultimately served. The editor of *Free Press*, in Milwaukee, Wisconsin wrote “Improve it by making the recruiting propaganda as little pronounced as possible.”¹⁵¹ Even those that responded in the negative, admitted their usefulness as space-fillers. The

¹⁴⁷ “Our Press Department,” *Recruiters' Bulletin*, June 1916, 11.

¹⁴⁸ “Press Bureau Checks Up,” *Recruiters' Bulletin*, August 1916, 10.

¹⁴⁹ “Press Bureau Checks Up,” *Recruiters' Bulletin*, August 1916, 10.

¹⁵⁰ “Press Bureau Checks Up,” *Recruiters' Bulletin*, August 1916, 10.

¹⁵¹ “Press Bureau Checks Up,” *Recruiters' Bulletin*, August 1916, 10.

editor of *The Standard* in New Bedford, Massachusetts claimed “I use them every now and then. I don’t approve of the service at all. The United States ought to pay for its publicity. However, although I feel that way, I have used several of your squibs because they were interesting and snappy.”¹⁵² The *Bulletin* reprinted much of the praise from the surveys, however, which included unabashed favor toward its service. Editors wrote, “it’s the best press agent service I know,” “Yours is the first live publicity service for military affairs,” “The snappiest and most interesting department service sent out by the government,” and “it has all other government publicity backed off the map.”¹⁵³

More than just press articles and recruiting strategy, the *Recruiters’ Bulletin* also represented an important tool for the dissemination of Marine art and culture. In December 1915, the *Recruiters’ Bulletin* introduced color for its Christmas edition, adding a pop of color and design to the formerly drab publication. From that time and through the rest of its life the *Bulletin* added Marine-created cartoons and art to its issues, which is vital still to this day to aid historians and the Corps’ researchers to visualize the crafting of the Corps’ public image through the eyes of those who helped to create it. The art that was printed in the *Bulletin*, particularly during World War I, provides an insightful look into the Corps’ culture during this period. Throughout the *Bulletin*’s run, a section titled “All Sorts of Poetry” also ran in each issue, which provided another glimpse into the Corps and its culture. The poems were written by Marines, former Marines, and even civilians who were interested in the Corps. In the May 1916 issue, the *Bulletin* published a poem titled “United States Marine” by a Dr. M.F. Clark from San Francisco,

¹⁵² “Press Bureau Checks Up,” *Recruiters’ Bulletin*, August 1916, 10-11.

¹⁵³ “Press Bureau Checks Up,” *Recruiters’ Bulletin*, August 1916, 10-11.

California, in which he captures well the importance of “manliness” in the Corps’ public image:

There ain’t no stripes upon his sleeve or title to his name,
He’s only one of thousands who protect Old Glory’s fame,
He swelters in the jungle heat or on the desert sands,
Or freezes to his very soul in distant arctic lands.
No matter where you find the man, his work is done and well.
And should we ever need him there, we’ll find the cuss in Hell.
He’s here, he’s there, he’s everywhere, where vict’ry must be won.
He’s first to dare, he’s first to do, the things that must be done.
He gave his friends, he gave his home, he gave his love, his all.
He gave up everything he had, to answer duty’s call.
But when the Great Commander calls him to the distant shore,
He’ll get the things he gave up here, a thousandfold and more.
There ain’t no strings up on his sleeve or title to his name,
He’s only one of thousands who protect Old Glory’s fame.
He does the work that must be done and does it like a man.
He’s brave, he’s true, he’s stanch, he’s clean, a real American.
You’ll find him where the blizzards sweep or sunshine smiles serene.
You’ll find him where he’s needed, the United States Marine.¹⁵⁴

The inclusion of important cultural elements in the *Recruiters’ Bulletin* highlights the significance of the *Bulletin* on the Corps’ public image. While Marines were indoctrinated with some of the history, legends, and lore of the Corps during boot camp

¹⁵⁴ Dr. M.F. Clark, “United States Marine,” *Recruiters’ Bulletin*, May 1916, 14.

and training, in many ways the public received a more complex and nuanced understanding of the Marines through the consumption of news in daily life.

At the Publicity Bureau, there were a few individual Marines who had a significant impact on the Corps' recruiting and publicity activities. As a result, these individuals also had a significant impact on the crafting and creation of much of the Corps' image and identity that persists still to this day. Perhaps the least studied of these Publicity Bureau Marines was Major Thomas G. Sterrett. For the most part, this was by design, as Sterrett liked to be behind the scenes and allowed the subtleties of publicity and the news to take the lead. Sterrett had an uncanny ability to capture the imagination of the press without putting himself in the limelight.

Sterrett was a veteran of the Spanish-American War with the 15th Pennsylvania Volunteer Infantry and before he enlisted in the Marine Corps in 1906, Sterrett was an actor and a newspaper man in his hometown of Erie, PA.¹⁵⁵ It is clear that Sterrett stood out among other Marines, even in his early days. His first duty station was a position of honor as part of the Marine detachment aboard the presidential yacht, the *Mayflower*. It is unclear exactly how the Marines aboard the *Mayflower* were chosen, but Sterrett's shipmates included another notable Marine of the era: Lieutenant Edgar Allen Poe, Jr.¹⁵⁶ Sterrett was also a prolific writer of short stories, fiction, and poems, a skill that certainly aided in his success with the Corps' Publicity Bureau.¹⁵⁷

¹⁵⁵ "The Bureau's Own Page; Quartermaster Sergeant Thomas. G. Sterrett," *Recruiters' Bulletin*, November 1916, 22.

¹⁵⁶ Muster Roll, USS *Mayflower*, December 1, 1906, U.S. Marine Corps History Division, Quantico, VA.

¹⁵⁷ "This is Tom Sterrett," *The Pennsylvania Legion News*, August 3, 1926.

At the Publicity Bureau, Major Sterrett used the *Recruiters' Bulletin* to disseminate some of the fun pieces he wrote, but also to help teach the Marine recruiters across the country how to create these little bits of interesting news for print. Sterrett was so important to the to the Publicity Bureau and the *Bulletin* in its early days that in the first and founding issue, Sterrett wrote nearly half of the articles.¹⁵⁸ Perhaps one of Sterrett's most important articles on his and the bureau's strategy to publicize the Corps was "Working the Newspapers." In it, Sterrett provided instructions for recruiters on how to create relationships with local newspaper editors so that they could have a direct line for their copy to get into print.¹⁵⁹ In this article, Sterrett also describes how the Marine recruiters in any town could argue to newspaper editors their mutually beneficial relationship, because they stand outside of their office all day and observe the goings on in the city. Sterrett gives an example of what a recruiter could say to an editor:

'Here' you say, 'is a simple proposition.' I stand for eight hours each day in front of my recruiting office. You know where it is...one of the busiest corners in town. Now then, I know, and you know, that no person could stand on that corner all day without picking up much of the news of the town. Then too, very often heart and human interesting stories 'break' in a recruiting office; sometimes criminals are apprehended by the shrewd recruiting officer. I'd like to be the [newspaper] representative on that corner, and, in return for protecting the news for your paper, I'd like for you from time to time to run such of my publicity matter as you can."¹⁶⁰

With Sterrett's experience in the newspapers and his position at the Publicity Bureau, Marine recruiters gained a step-by-step guide to "working the newspapers" in their respective towns, thus keeping the Marines in front of the public all across the U.S.

¹⁵⁸ *Recruiters' Bulletin*, November 1914.

¹⁵⁹ "Working the Newspapers," *Recruiters' Bulletin*, November 1914, 10.

¹⁶⁰ "Working the Newspapers," *Recruiters' Bulletin*, November 1914, 10

In 1916, with his enlistment complete, Sterrett left the Publicity Bureau and the Marine Corps for a brief period. He did not, however, leave behind his willingness to help the Corps' public image as during this period he consulted on the Corps' first major film, "*The Peacemakers: An Educational Pictorial Showing the United States Marines in Barracks, at Sea, and on the Field of Battle.*"¹⁶¹ Created in 1916 by the Thomas Edison Film Company along with the Corps' Publicity Bureau, "*The Peacemakers*" became an important film in Marine Corps and military history as it was said to be the first film to show actual combat footage of Marines in Haiti. There is currently no existing footage from "*The Peacemakers*," though the script is reprinted in its entirety in the *Recruiters' Bulletin*.¹⁶² As the First World War approached, it was clear that the Corps saw Sterrett as an indispensable part of their public relations strategy. Sterrett was offered an officer's commission and he rejoined the Corps and the Publicity Bureau in 1917. Thomas Sterrett helped to make the Marine Corps a household name and his service on the public image side of the Corps' activities was as important as those Marines who served overseas as it pertained to the future of the Corps.

When Sterrett retired from the Marine Corps as a major in 1919, *Colliers' Magazine* writer William Almon Wolff wrote an article about Sterrett's importance to the Marines and to the public's consumption of the Corps' image and identity. The article, titled "Selling the Marines," stated:

In 1915, when Sterrett came to the Marine Recruiting Publicity Bureau, he was a sergeant. Also, neither he nor anyone else knew it then, he was an advertising genius. The Recruiting Publicity Bureau wasn't worthy of its name then. It didn't really go after publicity at all. It got out a few

¹⁶¹ Lindsay, *This High Name*, 13.

¹⁶² "Making Marine Movies," *Recruiters' Bulletin*, August 1916, 1.

standardized posters urging men to join the corps, stuck them up in post-offices and such places, and let it go at that. Marines didn't mean much in your life then did they? You knew there were such fighters but weren't your ideas about them pretty vague? . . . If there was trouble somewhere at the ends of the earth, Marines were likely to settle it. Here's an illustration. There was a time when you would've gone into a grocery, on your way home, when you felt like a bite to eat, and said casually, "Give me half a pound of crackers." You wouldn't do that now. You'd ask for some package of nationally advertised biscuit. Just as now, if by some mischance, trouble developed in spite of what's happening in Paris, you'd be pretty likely to say "Hello! Something doing. Looks like a job for those devil dogs. Sure—let's get the Marines on the job!"

And the reason you know the Marines and call for them by name is exactly the same reason that makes you ask for the biscuit instead of crackers, and that is—advertising. *Sterrett sold you the Marines.*¹⁶³

Sterrett worked hard from 1914-1916 for the Publicity Bureau and set the standard for the successful bi-weekly news syndicate service.

From the explosion of the *Maine* through the first two decades of the twentieth century, the Marine Corps' public image changed dramatically. With the Corps' new roles as a result of American expansion in Caribbean and the Pacific, Marines began to receive positive news coverage as they were continuously called on to intervene in countries all over the world. As the press began to associate the Corps with concepts like bravery, conquerors, and defenders of American democracy, a rapid change took place, in which the Corps began to formalize a relationship with the press that had been, for the most part, so kind. In Chicago, Marine recruiters began to go above and beyond the typical "Help Wanted" ads in the newspaper and instead began to use newsworthy and

¹⁶³ "Major Sterrett, U.S. Marine, Enters Advertising," *Printers' Ink*, April-June 1919, 57.

human-interest press copy to get published frequently in the newspaper and to have some control over the copy.

When President Roosevelt nearly struck the Marine Corps from the navy in 1909, the Corps managed to survive through its political connections and prowess, and a newly found autonomy due to its recent publicized exploits all over the world. In the aftermath of the Roosevelt removal, the Corps continued to institutionalize its publicity and public image campaign through the creation of the military's first Publicity Bureau in 1911. While the Publicity Bureau's early years were spent as a printing press with a small contingent of press agent Marines, by 1914 with the creation of the *Recruiters' Bulletin*, the Corps could disseminate some of the tremendously successful strategies founded by individual Marines such as Major Thomas G. Sterrett.

Ultimately, The Marine Corps' Recruiting and Publicity Bureaus then helped to reinforce the Corps' public image in any city where men were recruited for the Marines. Alongside some of the earliest practices of public relations in the United States, this small military service sought former newspaper men, artists, and writers in order to establish a truly remarkable public relations system for its time. Through the publication of the *Recruiters' Bulletin*, the Corps was then able to create a discussion of recruiting successes and failures in order to continue to improve its image alongside new technologies and mediums. At the onset of the First World War, then, the Marine Corps already possessed an able and experienced publicity and public relations infrastructure that would help the Corps to not only continue to hone its public image but also to ensure that Marines were in front of the public's eyes in front of the other services.

CHAPTER II – FIRST TO FIGHT!: CRAFTING THE MARINE CORPS’ PUBLIC IMAGE IN THE FIRST WORLD WAR

In the opening decade of the twentieth century, the Marine Corps found itself involved in police actions and conflicts around the world. Having survived the Roosevelt Administration’s unification crisis in 1908, the Corps further institutionalized its relationship with the press and the American public through the development of the Publicity Bureau in 1916. The Marines embraced the positive press they received and sought to reinforce the Corps’ community-level relationships as World War I approached. If by 1917, the Corps’ public image was already dramatically different than it was prior to the Spanish-American War, the Corps’ public relations activities throughout World War I would create such an enduring public image that the Corps continues to rely on the myth and lore from this period to indoctrinate Marines to this day. During the war, the Marine Corps’ national and community level public relations activities created the image of an elite service that was integral to American public, and, would ultimately convince many in the American public that its role in World War I was far more significant than the small service could possibly achieve. Perhaps the greatest evidence of the Corps’ success lies in the conspiracy theories spouted by army officers at the end of the war who believed the Marines went too far in trying to steal recruits.¹⁶⁴

As the U.S. entered the war, however, there was already a stark contrast in public image between the army and Marines due to the activities in which they engaged. With the Marine Corps continuing to engage in police actions in the Caribbean, actions portrayed in the Wilsonian language of spreading democracy, the army was engaged in

¹⁶⁴ Robert B. Asprey, *At Belleau Wood* (New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1965), 327.

the unsuccessful manhunt for the Mexican outlaw, Pancho Villa. General John J. Pershing, commander of the expedition described himself as “a man looking for a needle in a hay stack with an armed guard standing over the stack forbidding you to look in the hay.”¹⁶⁵

The army, of course, faced several challenges in this effort as President Woodrow Wilson sought to micromanage the operation and Pancho Villa launched arguably one of the greatest foreign propaganda campaigns of the era.¹⁶⁶ Regardless, the articles in newspapers across the country portrayed two starkly different campaigns. Headlines regarding Marines in the Caribbean in the *Washington Post* in 1916 announced: “Dominican Army Revolt Crushed,” “U.S. Troops Defeat Dominican rebels,” and “Marines are Rewarded.”¹⁶⁷ Both the navy and Marine Corps gained credit for their ability to restore order in Santo Domingo. For the army, however, headlines portrayed a poorly planned and executed headhunt. Headlines in the *New York Times* included “Pershing Halts” and “Bandit Not Surrounded.”¹⁶⁸ It was within this context that the Marine Corps also began its own institutional fight to participate in the World War itself.

In April 1917, as the United States declared war, the Marine Commandant, Major General George Barnett immediately began to lobby for the Marine Corps to have a significant role in a major ground war. With his personal connections in the political

¹⁶⁵ Frederick Calhoun, *Power and Principle: Armed Intervention in Wilsonian Foreign Policy* (Kent: Kent State University Press, 1986), 57.

¹⁶⁶ Mark Cronlund Anderson, *Pancho Villa's Revolution by Headlines* (Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma Press, 2001), 3.

¹⁶⁷ Calhoun, *Power and Principle*, 2; “Dominican Army Revolt Crushed,” *Washington Post*, October 7, 1916, “Marines are Rewarded,” *Washington Post*, November 5, 1916, “U.S. Troops Defeat Dominican Rebels,” *Washington Post*, July 7, 1916.

¹⁶⁸ “Pershing Halts,” *New York Times*, April 21, 1916, “Bandit Not Surrounded,” *New York Times*, March 26, 1916.

establishment, and perhaps with the help of the confusion that attended the war planning process, Barnett managed to secure the Marine Corps a position in the newly formed Allied Expeditionary Force (AEF).¹⁶⁹ With their position in the war secured, Marine leaders immediately set about to recruit men ready to fight.

Only a day after the U.S. entry into the war, General Barnett sent a direct plea to newspapers in major cities around the U.S. for recruits who might be interested in signing up. General Barnett laid out why men should choose the Marine Corps over the other services. “Marine Corps service in times of peace is very attractive; in time of war it is doubly so to red-blooded men of action. Marines are always called first when war is imminent, and they have shown the way to fighting men since 1798.”¹⁷⁰ America’s entry into the war caused an enormous recruiting rush and the Marine Corps spent significant energy and money in convincing recruits why they should choose the Corps, especially in citing the Corps’ elite public image and opportunity to fight first.

As the repository for ideas on Marine recruiting activities, the *Recruiters’ Bulletin* portrays an insightful view into the Corps’ creativity in its recruiting endeavor. In the April 1917 issue, the use of trenches as a recruiting tool was proposed. “Where practicable, recruiters make arrangements to dig trenches, make them bomb proof and erect wire entanglements, in such suitable and available places as parks, public squares, etc.”¹⁷¹ It is unclear if any locales actually tore up their municipal parks to create faux

¹⁶⁹ Millett, *Semper Fidelis*, 290.

¹⁷⁰ “Major Gen. Barnett’s Plea for Marine Corps Recruits,” *New York Times*, April 4, 1917; “Begging for Marines,” *Chicago Tribune*, April 5, 1917.

¹⁷¹ “Recruiting in the Trenches, *Recruiters’ Bulletin*, April 1917.

trenches, but this signifies the ways in which the Corps attempted to prove it would send recruits straight to battle in Europe.

In Rochester, New York, the Marine in charge of recruiting, Sergeant George Kneller, provided a microcosm of recruiting and publicity strategy in the May 1917 issue of *Recruiters' Bulletin*. Sergeant Kneller wrote “For the past 10 months local publicity has been confined to dignified, matter-of-fact statements, every article teeming with news quality and at the same time carrying with it the great facts, in some form or other, that the Marine Corps is the first line of defense or attack, that they are the van in all military operations, and that experiences within the Corps are not limited to a specialized branch but on the contrary offer the individual change and variety which run the whole gamut of both Army and Navy activities.”¹⁷²

News pieces in the *Rochester Democrat and Chronicle* reveal how Sergeant Kneller’s strategy adhered to the Corps’ emphasis on hometown news pieces as it unfolded since mid-1916. The stories Sergeant Kneller described were not front-page stories, but instead were often several pages into the newspaper, usually where the stories of local interest appeared. In an October, 1916 news article amidst other pieces of local political interest as well as local meetings and opinions, there was an article titled “Rochester Marine Scores: Ellison Street Youth Attains Grade of Marksmen in Corps.” This article tells the story of local recruit Harold W. Hummel, who received his “preliminary instruction in gunnery at the U.S. Marines, Port Royal, S.C. training station, where the soldiers of the sea are drilled or their duties ashore and afloat.”¹⁷³ By all

¹⁷² “Practical Patriotism in Rochester, New York,” *Recruiters' Bulletin*, May 1917.

¹⁷³ “Rochester Marine Scores,” *Rochester Democrat and Chronicle*, October 13, 1916.

accounts, recruit Harold W. Hummel was certainly one of many Marines in training at Port Royal, S.C. who qualified as marksman. The article goes on to give detail into the equipment and shooting that took place, thus garnishing interest from young men interested in learning how to wield these weapons as well. “When but little more than a novice with the modern high-powered rifle, his splendid showing at slow and rapid fire gained for him this coveted distinction. Hereafter he will wear the badge of marksmanship and receive an increase of pay as a result of his success.”¹⁷⁴

In Rochester, the Corps continued to show that its focus on news of hometown interest during both peacetime and war was an effective way of both distinguishing itself as a service and advertising to a specific recruit; one who was athletic, masculine, and more interested in the fight than in the other “jobs” that may come with military service. Small articles published by Marine recruiters continued to run in Rochester newspapers up through the declaration of war. Some merely noted that a local Rochester Marine received a promotion, while others stressed the Corps’ need for good recruits for the coming conflict.¹⁷⁵ Sergeant Kneller and the recruiters in Rochester also focused on the concept of the Corps being the “First to Fight.” On February 5, 1917, Sergeant Kneller announced in a newspaper article that the Corps’ recruiting station would extend its hours to twelve hours a day and noted that “Should war break, the Marine Corps would be the first to enter action. These “soldiers of the sea” would be sent ahead to clear the way for

¹⁷⁴ “Rochester Marine Scores,” *Rochester Democrat and Chronicle*, October 13, 1916.

¹⁷⁵ “Wins Promotion in Marines,” *Rochester Democrat and Chronicle*, January 24, 1917; “Orders Go Out to Redouble Efforts to Fill Vacancies in Ranks of Navy and Marines,” *Rochester Democrat and Chronicle*, February 7, 1917.

the others. The organization has the reputation all over the world of being the best drilled body of men extant and also the most perfect as to physical fitness.”¹⁷⁶

The Corps also continued to stress that it only accepted the best recruits, a concept still reinforced today through the “Few Good Men” campaigns. In a February 8, 1917 article, the headline read “Interest Grows in Recruiting for Navy: Marine Corps Takes in 12 out of 85.” Citing that “in the last ten days the Marine recruiting station at No. 8 North Water Street has had eighty-five applicants for enlistment, of which number it has actually accepted twelve men for the corps.” This article is of interest because the reporter chose to highlight the fact that the Corps took in 12 of 85 applicants, a roughly 14% acceptance rate (as highlighted by the sub headline). Yet, in the same article, it noted that navy only accepted 4 of 27 recruits (a roughly 12%) acceptance rate. The article mentions that foreign applicants made up a large number of navy recruits, hence the low acceptance rate. However, perhaps the most important factor is that the Corps had triple the amount of interested recruits versus the navy.¹⁷⁷

In Sergeant Kneller’s recruiting strategy as he laid out in the *Recruiters’ Bulletin*, the most important class of recruits, those were immediately accepted and best fit the Corps’ masculinity and fitness demands, were athletes. Kneller was particularly proud that “results were attained by attracting one notable figure or group of figures from a certain section and his admirers, cronies, club mates, or classmates as the case would happen, would flock to join with him. The most notable instance of this sort was the Crimson Football Team which joined in a body and attached sixteen other men physically

¹⁷⁶ “Evening Recruiting for Marine Corps,” *Rochester Democrat and Chronicle*, February 5, 1917.

¹⁷⁷ “Interest Grows in Recruiting for Navy,” *Rochester Democrat and Chronicle*, February 8, 1917.

fit. Individual instances can be mentioned in the cases of...local athletes who drew about ten other accepted applicants.”¹⁷⁸

At Marine Corps headquarters, recruiters saw a practical reason to recruit athletes as well. Sergeant Bert Van Moss saw the need for athletic recruits for a different purpose. With the expectation of trench warfare, Sergeant Van Moss believed that as “it is useless to arm men with rifles unless you teach them their use. It is equally useless to train their bodies with calisthenics unless you teach them how to use their bodies to best advantage in a physical contact with an opponent...Therefore, let us mobilize the boxers and wrestlers and other athletes of the country and put them in our training camps and we will turn out a corps of fighters that will win with the least loss, let the enemy choose any weapons.”¹⁷⁹ Later in the war, the *Washington Post* described the type of man who joined the Marines: “Not only is every United States Marine a picked man—picked for his physical condition and his hard, horse sense—but he is an all-around man, a three-in-one man, the multiple Marine, the typical incarnation of American adaptiveness and readiness to fit into every circumstance, to take care of himself in every emergency.”¹⁸⁰

In May, 1917, the Marine Corps released an article to major news syndicates that served to introduce the Marine unit that was deploying to France. In the *New York Times*’ May 20 issue, the headline read “Fighting Not New To Doyen’s Marines.”¹⁸¹ The article was aimed to educate the public about both the unit and its commander in order to establish the legitimacy of its participation in the war. To prove that the Marines would

¹⁷⁸ “Practical Patriotism in Rochester, New York,” *Recruiters’ Bulletin*, May 1917.

¹⁷⁹ “Mobilize the Athletes,” *Recruiters’ Bulletin*, May 1917.

¹⁸⁰ “Great Deeds of Marines,” *Washington Post*, July 28, 1918.

¹⁸¹ “Fighting Not New to Doyen’s Marines,” *New York Times*, May 20, 1917.

see combat, the article made it clear that these Marines went to France as part of the “fighting division under Major General John J. Pershing.” The article also placed emphasis on the Corps’ public image as a combat unit. The second purpose of the article served as a small history of the Corps. This article also began to teach the public that throughout the history of the Marines, they were the first to fight when America called on them.¹⁸²

In New York, the Marine Corps Publicity Bureau stepped up its efforts at publicizing the Corps through the introduction of civilian media experts to aid the Corps in its recruiting efforts.¹⁸³ Along with writers and publishers such as Charles Phelps Cushing, the Corps commissioned artists and illustrators including James Montgomery Flagg, L.A. Shafer, Louis Fancher, and C.B. Falls to help visualize the Marine Corps’ public image.¹⁸⁴ The Marine Corps also doubled several departments at the Publicity Bureau as America entered the war, including press, photographic, and printing. In American magazines, the Marine Corps Publicity Bureau found that editors and publishers were willing to give the Corps plenty of space. An article, “Marines in the Magazines,” cites that Marine publicity content was published in *The Saturday Evening Post*, *Leslie’s*, *The Independent*, *The World’s Work*, *Physical Culture*, *Picture Play*, *Popular Science*, *Travel*, *The Nation’s Business*, *The Christian Herald*, and the *Review of Reviews*.¹⁸⁵ The Marine Corps was also featured as cover art in *Collier’s Magazine*, along with the headline “The Marines Have Landed.”¹⁸⁶ The space in these publications

¹⁸² “Fighting Not New for Doyen’s Marines,” *New York Times*, May 20, 1917.

¹⁸³ Lindsay, *This High Name*, 26.

¹⁸⁴ “Patriotic Contributions,” *Recruiters’ Bulletin*, May 1917.

¹⁸⁵ “Marines in the Magazines,” *Recruiters’ Bulletin*, May 1917.

¹⁸⁶ James B. Connolly, “The Marines Have Landed,” *Collier’s: The National Weekly*, May 26, 1917.

secured by the Marines, while perhaps modest in comparison to articles about the army and navy in general, far outweighed the Corps' own size and significance on the battlefield.

In the *Recruiters' Bulletin*, Marine recruiters sought to create a discourse that helped to optimize their recruiting patterns and assure that the Corps was not at a disadvantage in the recruiting field. While many recruiting activities focused on the military recruiting stations, there was another locale where American recruits could sign up for the service: the local postmaster station. U.S. Postmasters actually received an incentive of \$5.00 "for each accepted applicant they secure for any one of the three branches."¹⁸⁷ Enlistment cards were kept at these stations in every town that had one, which were far more in number than the service recruiting stations. The postmaster station, then, was one of the most contested public spaces for each of the services to reach recruits outside of their typical areas of operation and the Marines wanted to assure that the postmasters were helping their service.

The Marine Corps recruiters began discussion over the importance of postmaster stations as soon as war became a real possibility. In February 1917, an article was published in the *Recruiters' Bulletin* that laid out the issues the Corps faced at postmaster stations. "From a financial or patriotic point of view, it makes no difference to the postmaster to which branch he sends his men...They do not thoroughly understand the difference between the branches, other than that the army wants soldiers for land duty and the navy wants sailors for sea duty. Their knowledge of the Marine Corps is probably

¹⁸⁷ "Postmaster Recruiting: Needs Cooperation of Recruiting Service," *Recruiters' Bulletin*, February 1917.

decidedly vague.”¹⁸⁸ Marine recruiter First Sergeant Francis E. Turin also recognized the geographic expansion that postmaster recruiting opened for the Corps as he noted that “Postmaster stations have opened up sections of the country from whence it was not possible to obtain recruits heretofore.”¹⁸⁹

The idea of influencing postmasters for recruiting is significant in that it was born out of the dialogue of ideas between motivated Marine Corps recruiters and discussed in the issues of the *Recruiters' Bulletin* from the initial concept all the way to results in the field. Whereas in February 1917, an article in the *Recruiters' Bulletin* proposed that “recruiters should, when practicable *enlist the postmasters in the Marine Corps* [emphasis from original]—not literally, but enlist their sympathy, interest and favor in the Marine Corps. Educate them as to the “two-in-one” advantages of our service, and in the methods of recruiting.”¹⁹⁰ As it did with the nation as a whole, the Marine Corps saw an advantage in singling out postmasters because of their significant potential for recruiting Marines. This is important also because the individual Marine recruiters were not necessarily receiving statistical credit for these enlistments, outside of the Marines being enlisted under the general recruiting districts. Instead, this was an instance where Marines saw an opportunity to use education and focused publicity where it would make an impact on the both the Corps’ quotas and the public image as whole.

By May 1917, Marine recruiters sought to go a step further and create a new recruiting position called the “Postmaster Sergeant,” which was a Marine who would

¹⁸⁸ “Postmaster Recruiting: Needs Cooperation of Recruiting Service,” *Recruiters' Bulletin*, February 1917.

¹⁸⁹ First Sergeant Francis E. Turin, “Postmaster Sergeants: Would Stimulate Postmaster Recruiting,” *Recruiters' Bulletin*, May 1917.

¹⁹⁰ “Postmaster Recruiting: Needs Cooperation of Recruiting Service,” *Recruiters' Bulletin*, February 1917.

“perform the same duty as a traveling salesman. He will visit stations in order of where the field is best; he will see that the postmasters are stocked with literature, where he believes it would pay, he will recommend “A” signs as an aid to postmasters; he will recommend extensive advertising...and when necessary will personally work up a section for the postmaster; he will work in all lines to promote recruiting at postmaster stations.”¹⁹¹ Postmaster Sergeants, First Sergeant Turin argued, also acted as quality control agents for the type of recruit that filled out the enlistment cards at the station, thus assuring the Marine Corps would have less rejections.

Results of “postmaster recruiting” appeared quite successful, at least as reported by one major recruiting district. Sergeant John J. Sheridan, reporting from St. Louis, cited that “Postmaster stations have furnished Missouri and Kansas City Districts with sufficient applicants last month (May), to cause us to believe we have set a record with forty-four for Missouri and seven for Kansas City, and we think possibly our methods may aid others in this line of work.”¹⁹² Sergeant Sheridan and his team of recruiters in the district created personal relationships with the postmasters, a move which endeared the Marine Corps to these important “middle men” of enlistment and recruiting. Sergeant Sheridan noted that, “through our corresponding we have become acquainted with the majority of our postmasters; some have held long distance talks with us at their own expense.” Sheridan’s advice was to “*Never neglect* [author’s emphasis] a postmaster’s request, no matter how trivial. Write heart to heart letters, not official letters for your

¹⁹¹ First Sergeant Francis E. Turin, “Postmaster Sergeants: Would Stimulate Postmaster Recruiting,” *Recruiters’ Bulletin*, May 1917.

¹⁹² Sergeant John J. Sheridan, “More About Postmaster Recruiting,” *Recruiters’ Bulletin*, June 1917.

postmasters.”¹⁹³ First Sergeant Francis E. Turin, who originally suggested the idea of postmaster sergeants, wrote in the September 1917 issue of *Recruiters’ Bulletin* that “Probably one of the most important avenues opened to recruiting is postmaster recruiting, and let us hope it remains a fixture. When one headquarters can procure 80 enlistments from these stations...and at a very low cost per recruit, it surely is a paying proposition...Contemplate the territory to be worked and realize that postmasters are woven over the entire district, at work for us. One patriotic postmaster (and very energetic) issues circulars weekly, to his territory.”¹⁹⁴

From June 10 to 16, 1917, the Marine Corps held the “National U.S. Marine Corps Recruiting Week,” a national publicity campaign with major advertising endorsements from well-known figures such as Former President Theodore Roosevelt, Josephus Daniels, William Howard Taft, and novelist Winston Churchill (not related to the British statesman).¹⁹⁵ “Marine Corps Week,” as it was called, was not just a drive for signing “4,000 enlistments...by Saturday night,” but also it was important education campaign for the public about what the Marine Corps stood for and why it was important to the United States. In anticipation of the mass scale of the drive, the Marine Corps hired Donovan & Armstrong, a Philadelphia based advertising firm. Donovan and Armstrong helped the Marine Corps Publicity Bureau to distribute 3,300,000 “pieces of publicity matter—ranging from handbills to posters, from “movie” slides to telegrams.”¹⁹⁶ In major cities across the United States, the Marines held parades, rallies, and other publicity

¹⁹³ Sergeant John J. Sheridan, “More About Postmaster Recruiting,” *Recruiters’ Bulletin*, June 1917.

¹⁹⁴ “First Sergeant F.E. Turin, “Discourse on War Time Recruiting,” *Recruiters’ Bulletin*, September 1917.

¹⁹⁵ Lindsay, *This High Name*, 29.

¹⁹⁶ J.C. Armstrong (of Donovan & Armstrong, Philadelphia), “Marine Corps Week: In its Largest Meaning,” *Recruiters’ Bulletin*, June 1917.

stunts. The Publicity Bureau calculated that the Marine Corps received over six thousand columns of newspaper space across the country, “a great many of these were front page articles. Cartoons, illustrations, photographs, poetry, etc., with a large circulation, used a large three-color scheme to attract the attention of its readers of the Marine Corps.”¹⁹⁷

Newspapers in the major cities counted down the recruits needed from the Corps’ goal of 4,000. Each city was given a quota of recruits to reach. Chicago was set at 500, New York City at 250, while Los Angeles only needed 120.¹⁹⁸ In Chicago, the Corps only raised 390 of the 500 needed, and, while it did not meet its quota of 4,000 recruits nationwide, Marine Week offered an ideal opportunity for the Corps to get its name and mission out before the public. The advertisers of Donovan & Armstrong understood the power of the recruiting campaign and were aligned with the Corps’ needs, especially as it pertained to their public image. “The editorial mind has been brought to the realization of the Marine Corps as a distinct branch of the service; and not only so, but as a military arm deserving of special recognition and appreciation on the part of the American people.”¹⁹⁹ By the end of August 1917, the size of the United States Marine Corps swelled to over 32,000 Marines, up nearly 23,000 from the year before.²⁰⁰

The publicity material created and distributed by the Marine Corps Publicity Bureau was of high quality and the Marine Corps was able to wield tremendously effective slogans during war time recruiting. It is important to note, however, that by all

¹⁹⁷ Private Richard W. Denman, “Marines in Print,” *Recruiters’ Bulletin*, July 1917.

¹⁹⁸ “Two Days Left of Marine Week To Get 208 Men,” *Chicago Tribune*, June 15 1917; “Rush to Join Marine Corps,” *Los Angeles Times*, June 15, 1917; and “Regulars to Give Fifth Ave. Parade,” *New York Times*, June 16, 1917.

¹⁹⁹ J.C. Armstrong (of Donovan & Armstrong, Philadelphia), “Marine Corps Week: In its Largest Meaning,” *Recruiters’ Bulletin*, June 1917

²⁰⁰ George Barnett, “Marine Corps Recruited to Full Strength,” *Recruiters’ Bulletin*, August 1917.

accounts many enlisted Marines truly believed in their Corps and both its spirit and public image. In *the Marines Magazine*, a magazine that predated *Leatherneck* as a voice for enlisted Marines, the call to war and the influx of new recruits necessitated a special welcome from other Marines. In May 1917, under the headline “War!,” an enlisted Marine challenged Marines of the “old Corps” to educate the new recruits on the principles of their Corps:

To the hundreds of recruits who have lately entered the Marine Corps we extend our greeting. These new comrades probably know little of the history and traditions of the Corps, and the important duty devolves upon our older men to instruct and guide them in this respect, as well as in military life. Tell them that Marines are frequently called upon to do impossible things, and that the more impossible the task the better they like it and the more efficiently they do it. If this seems vain boasting, tell them that the history of the Marine Corps is filled with examples of difficult tasks well done, and that the inbred spirit of the Corps is to recognize no assignment as too arduous for accomplishment. This is a gallant Corps, a proud Corps. In the crises of war before us, the greatest war of history, let no stain of dishonor and shame dim the glory of its past record.²⁰¹

That the Marine Corps was able to recruit men with such lofty language about *esprit de corps* and appeals to the warrior citizens of the public and continue to maintain and reinforce those ideals both during and after these men left the Marine Corps was a significant accomplishment.

While the Marines conveyed adventure and travel as incentives for young recruits, the single most important recruiting slogan of the First World War was “First to Fight.” No other military slogan used in posters, A-signs, pamphlets, or newspaper articles better and more succinctly conveyed the most pressing reason these men should join the

²⁰¹ C.L.S., “War!,” *The Marines’ Magazine*, May, 1917.

service. The ability to see action as soon as possible was incredibly enticing to recruits. Historian Richard S. Faulkner argues, “of all the services, the Marines seemed best positioned to draw those men most seeking adventure and who were eager to get to France.”²⁰² “A Texan claimed that he enlisted in the Marines in June 1917 because “Back home the glaring posters had read “First to Fight!” “First on Land and Sea,” “France in 90 Days,” and the like...Every man in that group wanted to fight, or thought he did.”²⁰³

While the concept of “First to Fight” is now ingrained in Marine Corps lore and included as a verse of the Marines’ Hymn, the year 1917 certainly marked the first use of this term *en masse* for the Corps. A version of the Marines’ Hymn, not yet copywritten by the Corps presented in a September 1914 issue of *Overland Monthly and the Out West Magazine*, had the line “Admiration of the Nation,” in the place where “First to Fight for right and freedom” currently resides²⁰⁴ In editorials regarding the Corps’ history, the Marine landing at Cuba in the Spanish American War and their presence all over the globe was often used as on-the-spot proof of these claims. Pushback against the claim that the Marines were always the “first to fight” certainly existed as the editors of the *Recruiters’ Bulletin* provided clear responses to any questioning on the subject. “Perhaps it was inevitable that there should have been heard, here and there, a note of criticism of the recent recruiting campaign of the Marine Corps” wrote one editor, who explained to the reader that “the use of such slogans, descriptive of the Marine Corps as “Riot Squad of the Nation,” and “First to Fight,” is not braggadocio, but simply an epigrammatic

²⁰² Richard S. Faulkner, *Pershing’s Crusaders: The American Soldier in World War I* (Lawrence, KS: University Press of Kansas, 2017), 17.

²⁰³ Faulkner, *Pershing’s Crusaders*, 17.

²⁰⁴ Franklin T. Lee, “Soldiers of the Sea,” *Overland Monthly and the Out West Magazine*, September 1914.

presentation of the functions of the Corps in the military, naval and diplomatic service of the country.”²⁰⁵ In the “First to Fight” slogan, the Marine Corps’ management and acceptance of press during the Spanish American War truly offered the institution credibility to fall back on. As discussed in the last chapter, the Corps’ constant focus on its history in the press in the years leading to World War I built the public image that young recruits eagerly embraced.

In December 1917, as the Marine brigade in Europe was training in the cold European winter, the *Recruiters’ Bulletin* sought to inquire of major publishers across the country about their thoughts of the Corps’ publicity successes. While these surveys are indeed biased (it is unclear exactly what questions were asked and which surveys were excluded), there were 44 responses from major newspaper editors, and many cited the “First to Fight” slogan and “human interest stories” as the primary reasons for the Corps’ success. W.B. Hayward, editor of the *New York Post* stated that “in regard to posters, it is generally conceded that the Marine Corps’ slogan “First to Fight,” is the very best recruiting appeal of the war.” A.R. Ferguson, editor of the *New York Tribune* added that “All over the country posters are appealing to brave men to join the organization that is “First to Fight” and the men who are responding are the men who want action and want it bad...Not only has the Marine Corps a real and separate appeal from the other branches of the service, but it makes excellent capital of it.”²⁰⁶

The success of the Corps’ public image and recruiting campaigns is best signified by the fact that the Marine Corps recruited to its capacity throughout the war. The

²⁰⁵ “The Recruiting Campaign,” *Recruiters’ Bulletin*, August 1917.

²⁰⁶ “Newspaper Men Write About Marines,” *Recruiters’ Bulletin*, December 1917.

Marines even made sure to note that while the Corps was forced to accept Selective Service draftees in August 1918, the Marines fighting in Europe were an “all-volunteer force.”²⁰⁷ As it is still today, the Marine Corps sent its recruits to training centers at several points around the United States for harsh and realistic training.²⁰⁸ In a letter home to his recruiter, one Parris Island Marine recruit lamented “I haven’t completed my training yet—so I don’t know what there is in store for me, but judging from past performances, I reckon that standing up before a machine gun and being shot at, or thrown from a speeding aeroplane, would be right in line. We ought to be puncture-proof when we get out of here.”²⁰⁹

In order for the Corps to make sure its Marines stood up to its claims about being an elite fighting force, historian Allan Millett argued that “the rigor and standardization of Marine recruit training at the depot assured the Corps of better-trained enlisted men than the army could provide for the American Expeditionary Forces.”²¹⁰ General Barnett assigned the combat-tested Major Smedley Butler as commanding officer of the base at Quantico. Regarding Butler’s focus on recreating the conditions in Europe, one Marine recruit at Quantico noted “a whole section of the Virginia woodland has been taken over and blasted, dug, and mined by the miners and sappers of the Marine corps until it is almost an exact replica of the country around Château-Thierry and Vimy Ridge.”²¹¹

²⁰⁷ Craig M. Cameron, *American Samurai: Myth, Imagination, and the Conduct of Battle in the First Marine Division, 1941-1951* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 25.

²⁰⁸ Hans Schmidt, *Maverick Marine: General Smedley D. Butler and the Contradictions of American Military History* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1987), 98.

²⁰⁹ Kemper F. Cowing, comp., “Dear Folks at Home...:” *The Glorious Story of the United States Marines in France as Told by Their Letters from the Battlefield*, ed. Courtney Ryley Cooper (New York: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1919), 4.

²¹⁰ Millett, *Semper Fidelis*, 290.

²¹¹ Schmidt, *Maverick Marine*, 98.

The first of two Marine Corps regiments arrived in Europe by June 1917. Commanded by Colonel Doyen, the 5th Marine Regiment, one half of the 4th Marine Brigade, sailed for France to begin its on-site training.²¹² To General Barnett's great dismay, army leadership ordered Marines to do exactly what the Corps' publicity promised the public it would not do: security and police duty far away from the action on the front lines.²¹³ In response, General Barnett turned to the newspapers to convince the public that the Marines were not used in such a way. In an article titled "Marines Force in France Not Split," Barnett outright denied the fact that Marines "had been split up into small details and assigned to provost guard duty in towns where Americans troops are billeted."²¹⁴ In order to preserve the slogan "First to Fight," and "Tell that to the Marines," Barnett needed to keep the Corps' reputation of a combat service intact.

For the Marines in Europe, especially those who responded to the call of the Corps' recruiting campaigns, the reality of war hit hard. This was especially evident for the Marines' expectation that the Corps would be "First to Fight." It was not until the winter of 1917-1918, that General Pershing ultimately integrated the 5th Marine Regiment and eventually the entire 4th Marine Brigade into the U.S. Army's 2nd Infantry Division.²¹⁵ In January 1918, then, the 4th Marine Brigade was officially at full capacity with the arrival and training of the 6th Marines.²¹⁶ While perhaps rough on the Marines, the conditions of training during that winter reflected the harsh conditions soldiers

²¹² Edwin N. McClellan, *The United States Marine Corps in the World War* (Washington, D.C.: Historical Branch, G-3 Division, Headquarters, U.S. Marine Corps, 1920), 32.

²¹³ Millett, *Semper Fidelis*, 293.

²¹⁴ "Marine Force in France Not Split," *New York Times*, October 7, 1917.

²¹⁵ Millett, *Semper Fidelis*, 294.

²¹⁶ Asprey, *At Belleau Wood*, 34.

experienced at the front. In a letter home, Major Robert L. Denig briefly mentioned the obstacle he most resented, mud: “I am mud from head to toes, feet always wet in spite of hip boots. The woolen socks are fine. I usually have on three pairs, as the snow and *mud* cover everything and everyone. Mud on the western Front is no joke, it can’t be described; it is thick and sticky, and when it dries on you it is as hard as a brick. My overcoat will stand alone.”²¹⁷ When they arrived, Marines also had to acclimate themselves to French weaponry, which they claimed were “heavy, clumsy, and inaccurate.”²¹⁸

When it came to publicizing the Corps’ activities in Europe in early 1918, the Publicity Bureau and recruiters benefited from a few holes in the censorship rules. While the 4th Marine Brigade was underneath the leadership of the army, the Department of the Navy still controlled its policies regarding censorship. The army’s strict censorship policy was that the press was “not permitted to mention...the name, number, or location of any unit of the forces.”²¹⁹ The press, however, were allowed to identify the Marine brigade, since it was a part of the navy. This small distinction meant that not only could the war correspondents in Europe call out the Marines for the service, but that the Corps’ public relations entities back in the U.S. could also take advantage of this loophole. There are many different accounts of the circumstances under which this policy played out; however, historian Allan Millett writes that:

Barnett asked Pershing if the Marine brigade could be officially called the 4th Brigade (U.S.

Marines), for it had become the fourth Marine brigade then serving in 1917. The brigade was

²¹⁷ Cowing, *Dear Folks at Home*, 28.

²¹⁸ Asprey, *At Belleau Wood*, 36.

²¹⁹ A.E.F. Commander in Chief, “Staff Sections and Services,” in *United States Army in World War I, 1917-1919, United States Army in the World War, 1917-1919* (Washington, D.C.: 1948), 82.

already the 4th Infantry Brigade of the AEF, so Pershing's staff saw no objection to the special designation, thus assuring that the brigade would retain its Marine Corps identity not only in official reports but in the newspapers as well. This casual decision, routinely made, eventually created jealousy of the Marines in the AEF when Pershing's censors in 1918 decided that newsmen could not identify AEF units by number but could refer to the Marine brigade by name.²²⁰

While the U.S. had a massive army in Europe, it is then no surprise that the Marines, "a formation of only 7,000 strong, could generate a sense of community among reporters as well as its own members."²²¹

With the Marine brigade in France, the Publicity Bureau and recruiting activities back in the U.S. returned to the staples of publicity. Articles in the *Recruiters' Bulletin* reminded Marine recruiters to create positive and close relationships with newspaper editors and reporters in order to get the Corps' "human interest stories" out to the public. While the slogan "First to Fight" waned in its importance to new recruits (and because the selective service system filled the Corps to its quotas), the Corps sought to use both news coming in from the front and hundreds of short stories of interest to generate publicity. In the February 1918 issue of the *Recruiters' Bulletin*, stories provided for Marine recruiters to pass on to newspapers included a wide range of topics, from a 26-year-old little person who wanted to be a Marine, to movie stars, and "motorcycle Marines," all geared toward keeping the Corps' name in front of the public. During this period, the *Recruiters' Bulletin's* "Keeping the Corps in the Limelight" section, which in

²²⁰ Millett, *Semper Fidelis*, 294.

²²¹ Dennis Showalter, "The Evolution of the U.S. Marine Corps into a Military Elite in the Twentieth Century," *Marine Corps Gazette*, (November 1979), 48.

1917 was usually one page or two, reached four to five pages in the early 1918 issues.²²²

From February 4-7, 1918, the Marines held the first U.S. Marine Corps Publicity Conference in New York City. The major players of the Marine publicity world, including Colonel A.S. McLemore, Captain Thomas G. Sterrett, and Commandant Major General George Barnett all agreed to temporarily retire the “First to Fight” slogan in favor of major generalized newspaper human interest publicity. It was also at this conference the Marines “agreed that the Corps device—globe, eagle and anchor—was its most staple trademark, and was also more closely identified with the Corps than the uniform or any of the various slogans.”²²³

In Europe, the Publicity Bureau also had correspondents reporting news back for recruiters in the U.S. A former Philadelphia newsman, only referred to as Sergeant Dietrich, wrote small interest pieces on the happenings for Marines overseas, from Thanksgiving dinners to the delivery of the mail.²²⁴ The most extensive war correspondent material for the *Recruiters' Bulletin*, however, came from First Lieutenant Charles Phelps Cushing, the former editor of *Literary Digest* and *Collier's Weekly* and future founding correspondent for *Stars and Stripes*. Cushing was “enrolled” in the Marine Corps in April 1917 and the Publicity Bureau immediately put him to work reporting on the Marines’ deployment to Europe.²²⁵ One year later, Cushing began writing short stories on the Corps’ activities, both military and civilian, in France. Cushing’s stories contained a different tone than most of the interest pieces coming back

²²² *Recruiters' Bulletin*, February 1918.

²²³ “The Marine Corps Publicity Conference,” *Recruiters' Bulletin*, February 1918.

²²⁴ Sergeant Dietrich, “Thanksgiving Feast for Overseas Troops,” *Recruiters' Bulletin*, October 1917 and “Mail for Overseas Regiment,” *Recruiters' Bulletin*, October 1917.

²²⁵ “The Bureau’s Own Page,” *Recruiters' Bulletin*, April 1917.

from the front. Cushing was particularly talented at describing the small interactions between the Marines in France and French locals. In one piece, “Marine Billeted with French Family,” Cushing describes his time living at the home of a French couple, even staying in their son’s room, who was then fighting at the front.²²⁶

It was in April 1918 as well that the Marines in Europe mysteriously earned a nickname that became part of the Corps’ lore. The first mention of “*teufel hunden*,” translated by the Marines as “Devil Dogs” in a major American newspaper came on April 27, 1918. In a *New York Times* article titled “Wounded Marines Were Known Here,” potentially written by the Corps’ Publicity Bureau, “a letter from a Marine, written from the first-line trenches, referred with a show of pride to a nickname which the Germans are said to have given the sea fighters. The name is “*teufel hunden*,” which means “devil dogs.”²²⁷ The following day, the *Los Angeles Times* ran an article from the “A.P. Night Wire,” headlined “Devil Dogs - German Title.” According to “letters” received from Marines overseas, “the name...saves the “soldiers of the sea” from selecting a substitute for the unfavored ‘Sammy’...Wow, those guys put us in the same class with the ladies from hell!” a veteran sergeant of the Marines was quoted as saying in one note home.”²²⁸

With the Corps’ Publicity Bureau only abandoning the slogan “First to Fight” a few months earlier, the appearance of the “Devil Dogs” moniker reinvigorated the Corps’ publicity machine. In the April 1918 issue of *Recruiters’ Bulletin*, the Publicity Bureau writers boasted, “the striking name [Devil Dogs] spread like fire. Papers in the United States readily grasped it and from now on Soldiers of the Sea apparently have lost the

²²⁶ Charles Phelps Cushing, “Marine Billeted with French Family, *Recruiters’ Bulletin*, April 1918.

²²⁷ “Wounded Marines Were Known Here,” *New York Times*, April 27, 1918.

²²⁸ “Devil Dogs—German Title,” *Los Angeles Times*, April 28, 1918.

title of “leatherneck” and are to be known as *Teufel Hunden* or Devil Dogs.”²²⁹ It is difficult to assess the veracity of the letter regarding the Germans calling the Corps *teufel hunden*, or, as is debated among the Corps’ historians, whether it was spelled in a different way or meant something entirely different in German. The name stuck, and it emerged at precisely the opportune moment for the Corps’ participation in the major action along the Western Front as it happened in June 1918.

In terms of cumulative effect on the Corps’ public image, the most significant battle of the war for the Marines was the Battle of Belleau Wood. Historian Robert Lindsay argued that the Corps’ “slogans, use of civilian journalistic talent, initiation of the hometown release and the beginnings of the combat correspondent system,” all worked together in June of 1918 to help the Corps publicize its actions in a battle that would stay in the Corps’ lore for the next 100 years.²³⁰ The story of Belleau Wood, however, hinges on the activities of a few war correspondents who experienced a traumatic incident as the famous battle raged on. On June 5, three *New York Sun* correspondents, Arthur Hartzell, Tom Johnson, Dave Belamy, and Floyd Gibbons, a *Chicago Tribune* correspondent all traveled together to the edge of a wooded area called Belleau Wood.²³¹ Gibbons, a “dramatic, colorful” writer, penned a story about the bravery of Marines based on rumors he heard about the battle from the day before. While the Marines were not the only unit present at the battle, Gibbons failed to mention any other military outfit in his story.²³² Historian Emmet Crozier argues that “he [Gibbons]

²²⁹ “According to Fritz,” *Recruiters’ Bulletin*, April 1918.

²³⁰ Lindsay, *This High Name*, 30.

²³¹ Emmet Crozier, *American Reporters on the Western Front* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1959), 222.

²³² Crozier, *American Reporters*, 222.

expected to fill in authentic detail when he returned to Paris that night.” After writing the dramatic tale, Gibbons set off with the other reporters to catch up to the Marines who were then in pursuit of retreating Germans.²³³

There are ultimately two perspectives of the Battle of Belleau Wood. The complex reality of fighting that occurred there and the version of events that emerged in the press that largely favored the Corps’ participation. The broader context and reality of the Battle of Belleau Wood is significant because it is important to note that the Marines were certainly not the only units involved in the broader line of battle. The Battle of Belleau Wood took place as allied forces collided with the head of a German advance on the town of Château-Thierry. To support the French, who represented the front-line forces, General Pershing deployed the U.S. 2nd and 3rd Infantry Divisions as reserves.

That the Corps only represented a small portion of those fighting there does not beget the fact that the Marines suffered terrific losses in the engagement. However, throughout the operation itself, AEF headquarters denied that the Battle of Belleau Wood was “anything more than a minor local engagement.”²³⁴ For the Marines during the battle, however, “by the time the late twilight fell, the Corps had suffered more casualties (one thousand officers and men) than it had lost in its entire history.”²³⁵ While those numbers were small in comparison to the generation-killing battles at Verdun and the Somme, they did indeed have a significant impact on the Corps.

That the battle inflicted severe casualties on the Marines was important in the Corps’ history, however, the reality of the battle was still at odds with many of the reports

²³³ Crozier, *American Reporters*, 222.

²³⁴ Millett, *Semper Fidelis*, 302.

²³⁵ Millett, *Semper Fidelis*, 302.

and stories that emerged. As is true in the fog of war, the Battle of Belleau Wood was mired in an environment of confusion, bad communication, and small, though bloody, engagements with the enemy.²³⁶ Even as the French bore the brunt of the German artillery on the front lines, the battle-wearied French soldiers defended their positions in the center of the line. In fact, historians argue that some of the most heroic actions of the battle was in the French army's ability to hold out long enough for reinforcements of the American 2d Infantry Division to arrive. As the French focused their efforts on counter-battery fire against the Germans, the Marines arrived in time to repel the German advance.²³⁷ When the Marines arrived, the French began to withdraw, and it was as the French turned that one of the Corps' legendary interactions occurred. Reportedly, the conversation occurred between a French Major and Marine Captain Lloyd Williams, a company commander in the 5th Marines. Historian Robert Asprey argues that the interaction that transpired was a true moment of bravado for the Marine who encountered the retreating French major.

In early afternoon Captain Williams reported to Wise that 'all French troops on our right have fallen back, leaving a gap.' On Williams' right, Shearer's troops reported similar information. To plug the gap Shearer sent in two platoons from his reserve which shortly made contact with Williams' right...By the evening of June 3 the American positions were full of retreating French soldiers. One of them, a French major of Chasseurs, stumbled up to Williams' second in command Captain Corbin. In broken English the major informed Corbin of the German attack and told him to withdraw his line. When Corbin paid no attention he took a pad from his tunic and in English

²³⁶ Asprey, *At Belleau Wood*, 123.

²³⁷ Asprey, *At Belleau Wood*, 123-26.

wrote a direct order to retreat. Corbin gave this to Williams who exploded: “Retreat, hell. We just got here.”²³⁸

Historian Edward Lengel, however, disputes the viability of the interaction that occurred. In his study of the battle, Lengel argues that the French major was, instead, “disagreeing—as field officers are entitled to do—about the suitability of the American position,” specifically at Les Mares Farm.²³⁹ As is the story for so much of the Corps’ lore, the reality became far less important to history than Corbin’s words, which remain so ingrained in Marine Corps lore that they are carved into the walls of the National Museum of the Marine Corps.

The next morning, June 6, the Marines advanced under fire through the wheat field toward a small hill called Hill 142. When the Germans ended the artillery barrage, the Germany machine guns opened up on the Marines, beginning what many historians argue was “the most catastrophic day in Marine Corps history.”²⁴⁰ Several waves of German counter attacks on Hill 142 resulted in many stories of brutal hand-to-hand combat as the Germans employed infiltration attacks rather than massive wave attacks.²⁴¹

The Marines represented only a fraction of the units along the front, to include numerous French and other American units. Back in the U.S., however, many newspapers attributed the halt of the German advance at Chateau Thierry and Belleau Wood to the Marines, and even credited the Corps for saving Paris. The sensational news back home was catapulted, in large part, due to the stories of the four American

²³⁸ Asprey, *At Belleau Wood*, 127.

²³⁹ Edward G. Lengel, *Thunder in Flames: Americans in the Crucible of Combat, 1917-1918* (Lawrence, KS: University Press of Kansas, 2015), 88.

²⁴⁰ George B. Clark as quoted in Lengel, *Thunder in Flames*, 102.

²⁴¹ Lengel, *Thunder in Flames*, 106.

newspaper correspondents who followed the Marines into that wheat field at Belleau Wood. Gibbons, Hartzell, and Berry accompanied the Marines on a few scouting missions to test German positions. After hearing rumors of the Marines' bravery the day before, the journalists wanted to see the action for themselves. As the war correspondents walked along a low fence line, a machine gun opened up and they all immediately dropped to the ground. Historian Emmet Crozier recounted the correspondents' story. "Gibbons couldn't see anything with his nose buried in the grass. Slowly he raised his head and looked around. Another sharp rattle of machine gun fire. Berry called, 'Get down!' but it was too late. One of the bullets had passed through Gibbons' upper arm; another, through his left eye."²⁴² Direly injured, both Berry and Gibbons were immediately taken behind the lines to care for their wounds. Due to the severity of the wounds, Hartzell believed Gibbons had almost certainly died.²⁴³ Gibbons, however, clung to life at a Marine hospital. The short story he wrote a day earlier, the story for which he would later "fill in the authentic detail," was then sent on to the *Chicago Tribune* by his colleagues. That story was then published without edit or censor as a memorial to Gibbons.²⁴⁴ The public reacted strongly to the dramatic language of Gibbons' story. In his description of the moments before the attack (which he did not himself witness), Gibbons provided striking details. "The bullets nipped the tops of the young wheat and

²⁴² Crozier, *American Reporters*, 222-23.

²⁴³ Crozier, *American Reporters*, 222-23.

²⁴⁴ Millett, *Semper Fidelis*, 303.

ripped the bark from the trees three feet from the ground on which the Marine lay. The minute for the Marine advance was approaching.”²⁴⁵

There is no doubt the Marines fought a terrible and bloody battle at Belleau Wood. The Marines there put up a tremendous defense against a determined German enemy. While the press at home was interested the Corps’ successes, the Marines also recognized internally that the Battle of Belleau Wood was something special. In a letter to Commandant George Barnett, Major Frank E. Evans of the 6th Marine Regiment wrote, “I know you will be interested in what gallant work the officers and men are doing. The men have learned that the officers will lead them anywhere and the men worship them. And the officers will talk you to a finish at any time about their men. But they’ll hit us heavily on officers, for they had to fight with a reckless bravery to carry the day.”²⁴⁶

The Marines also received recognition from the French, perhaps further entrenching their role in the battle. General Jean Degoutte, commanding officer of the French VI Army, changed the very name of the Belleau Wood to “*Bois de la Brigade de Marine*.” His 30 June orders read, “In view of the brilliant conduct of the 4th Brigade of the 2nd U.S. Division, which in a spirited fight took Bouresches and the important strong point of *Bois de Belleau*, stubbornly defended by a large enemy force, the General

²⁴⁵ Robert J. Moskin, *The U.S. Marine Corps Story*, 3rd Revised Edition ed. (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1992), 99; quoted from, Floyd Gibbons, *And They Thought We Wouldn't Fight* (New York: George H. Duran Co., 1918), 304.

²⁴⁶ Cowing, *Dear Folks at Home*, 110.

commanding the VI Army order that, henceforth, in all official papers, the *Bois de Belleau* shall be named “*Bois de la Brigade de Marine*.”²⁴⁷

The Marines paid a high price for their efforts at Belleau Wood. By June 8, the 4th Marine Brigade had lost nearly sixty percent of its strength, though its Marines continued to fight on.²⁴⁸ The brigade reassembled and took on replacements and by late June, reentered the same sector and were able to secure a victory. Casualties for the Marines and for the whole division were terrible. The 2d Division lost 8,963 casualties, while the Marines alone lost 4,710.²⁴⁹

For the Marines’ first major battle of the war, Belleau Wood not only cemented their abilities in the eyes of the Corps, but also to the American public. Even though the Marines were under the command of an army division, animosity grew over the Corps’ visibility in the press. Historian Robert Asprey found that “soldiers remained victims of static war, tempers frayed and occasionally flared.” One army major called the reports that emerged from Belleau Wood “ludicrous and in many cases impossible.”²⁵⁰ That the Marines were credited with victory and even saving Paris, did not sit well with army leadership. At one point, “Pershing personally intervened to gain the army better publicity.”²⁵¹ During a visit of the French premier, Georges Clemenceau, Pershing did not invite any Marines to the event. Pershing also tried to get the order for the name of Belleau Wood, now changed to *Bois de la Brigade Marine*, to be cancelled.²⁵² That the

²⁴⁷ Quoted in John W. Thomason, *Fix Bayonets!* (New York: Blue Ribbon Books, 1925), 66. To see the original orders in French see: McClellan, *Marines in the World War*, 42.

²⁴⁸ Millett, *Semper Fidelis*, 302-03.

²⁴⁹ Millett, *Semper Fidelis*, 304.

²⁵⁰ Asprey, *At Belleau Wood*, 312.

²⁵¹ Asprey, *At Belleau Wood*, 326-27.

²⁵² Alan Axelrod, *Miracle at Belleau Wood: The Birth of the Modern Marine Corps* (Guilford, CT: Lyons Press, 2007), 226.

highest leadership of the army became concerned with the Corps' publicity practices is a significant indication of the Marines' success in getting their name out in front of the other services.

The cover of the July 1918 *Recruiters' Bulletin* was a somber artistic expression of a Marine placing a wreath on a memorial dedicated to the Marines who fought at Chateau Thierry the month before. This was quite a contrast to the boastful publicity covers from the year previous, and it signified the beating the Corps had taken, even if the Marines put up a spectacular fight.²⁵³ Stories of death, wounds, gas, and fear quickly overshadowed the circuses, parades, and publicity stunts from before. Whereas prior to the war, the Marines were the friendly service that sought to get itself out in front of the public and promised to be the "first to fight," the realities of war altered the way publicity was handled in general. The Marines were no longer an in between service. The Corps' actions in Europe helped to legitimize and solidify its place in the military establishment and recruiting began to gear more toward the Corps' elite status.

Stories in the *Recruiters' Bulletin*, such as the death of Captain Edward C. Fuller marked the tone moving forward. Fuller "exposed himself fearlessly to a terrible barrage to superintend personally the assurance of shelter to his men." His commanding officer, Major Holland M. Smith, penned a touching tribute to this Marine who he "had watched... since he joined the Brigade and have been interested in him." "Ted helped to immortalize the Marines in the hearts of the French people...helped to stem and then push back the hordes of Huns...[and] took a prominent part in adding glorious pages to the

²⁵³ "Cover, *Recruiters' Bulletin*, July 1918.

history of our beloved Corps.”²⁵⁴ The *Recruiters’ Bulletin* also published an ongoing list of the Marines who were killed in the war.

In September 1918, the Corps received publicity for its actions in two separate theaters of war. Widely reprinted articles about the Corps’ service in Europe, some with titles like, “U.S. Marines Punish Hun Treachery,” continued to run in newspapers across the country. These articles were often unattributed and contained few details, making it most likely that they were crafted by the Publicity Bureau. Published in the *Albany (New York) Daily Democrat*, this article told the story about a Marine platoon that cornered a German unit, which yelled “Kamerad!” and surrendered. As the Marines waited for the Germans to drop their arms, the Germans suddenly opened fire on the unprepared Marines, killing thirty before the Marines defeated them.²⁵⁵ No location or date for the action is provided.

During this same period, there were also Marines fighting an insurgency in Santo Domingo, continuing the Corps’ part as America’s police force in the Caribbean. Much like the previous news releases regarding the actions of Marines in Haiti, Cuba, and Panama, the headlines on September 18, 1918 read, “Kill 20 Dominican Bandits: U.S. Marines’ Only Casualty in Skirmish is Wounded Mule.”²⁵⁶ Articles such as these serve only to bolster the Corps’ reputation and do little by way of presenting the news. In the article it is stated that the information was announced by Marine Corps headquarters,

²⁵⁴ Holland M. Smith, “Letter of Tribute Explains How Captain Fuller was Killed in Action, *Recruiters’ Bulletin*, July 1918.

²⁵⁵ “U.S. Marines Punish Hun Treachery,” *Albany Daily Democrat*, September 18, 1918.

²⁵⁶ “Kill 20 Dominican Bandits,” *Washington Post*, September 18, 1918.

further reinforcing that the Marine Corps sought to craft and reinforce its image through controlling and the type of news that was presented to the public where it could.

Marine involvement in battles and skirmishes in Europe continued to reach American newspapers, though none penetrated the news cycle in the same way Belleau Wood and Chateau-Thierry had. In fact, the actions of Marines at these two early battles appeared in the newspapers far more than the Corps' bloodier engagements at places like Blanc Mont Ridge in October 1918. It appears that this was, in large part, the making of the Publicity Bureau. As wounded Marines returned from Europe following these more famous early battles, their stories were pushed to the media with gusto.

Much like the recruiting strategy of the early Chicago recruiting district in 1907, the Corps focused in on the individual hometowns of Marines who served in these battles. On one day in October 1918, articles were published in Pennsylvania, Indiana, and Kansas about local Marines who fought in these battles. In the *Wichita Eagle*, a large photo of two local Marines appeared on page two of the October 17, 1918 edition. The headline read, "Wounded Marines Return, Battle Scarred," and reported that "like all brave men, they are modest in the extreme when telling about their own part in the fight."²⁵⁷ A popular article reprinted in Pennsylvania was about former professional baseball player, Private Hugh "Hughie" Miller, who joined the Marine Corps and was wounded three times at Belleau Wood. The article noted, however, the Private Miller continued to serve in France with his fellow Marines.²⁵⁸

²⁵⁷ "Wounded Marines Return Battle Scarred," *Wichita Eagle*, October 17, 1918.

²⁵⁸ "Private Hugh Miller, Former Baseball Star, Wounded Three Times, *The Evening News* (Harrisburg, PA), October 17, 1918.

As the war raged on while the 4th Marine Brigade rested in late September 1918, the Corps continued to benefit from its showing at Chateau Thierry and Belleau Wood. That the Marines benefited from the censorship gap surrounding press's ability to reference their brigade by name in France is evidenced in a widely reprinted article appeared in the *Dunkirk (New York) Evening Observer* titled "Yanks Blocked Drive on Paris." The wording was favorable to the Marines, as it stated "A graphic eyewitness account of the fighting near Chateau-Thierry, in which American divisions, including the Marine brigade, took part, early in June, was made public recently."²⁵⁹ While several U.S. Army divisions took part in the conflict, the Marines are highlighted, despite only representing a tiny fraction of the actual forces there.

In the October 1918 issue of *Recruiters' Bulletin*, the Publicity Bureau sought several outside opinion pieces about the Corps' activities in Europe, particularly at Chateau Thierry and Belleau Wood, and they received quite a number of positive responses. Correspondent A.W. Brown of the *Pittsburgh Gazette-Times* described the response the Marines received at a march in Paris. With the headline "Joyous Acclaim by All of Paris Gladdens Hearts of Marines While on Parade There," Brown reinforced the narrative that the legend of the Marines saving Paris potentially stemmed from local French press reports. At the parade "the great crowd caught sight of their banner. Then a cheer arose: "*Vive les Marines.*"²⁶⁰ In a story by Martin Green, a correspondent with the *New York Evening World*, the reporter wrote of the Marines at Belleau Wood, "they were aided by the Ninth and Twenty-Third Infantry, but it happened that the Marines were in

²⁵⁹ "Yanks Blocked Drive to Paris," *Dunkirk Evening Observer*, September 14, 1918.

²⁶⁰ A.W. Brown, "Joyous Acclaim by All of Paris Gladdens Hearts of Marines While on Parade There," *Recruiters' Bulletin*, October 1918.

the hottest of the fighting and it also happened that the Marines were the first to go ahead. When the history of the war is written, it will be found that the Marines were the pioneers in advancing into German territory at the most crucial period of the war.”²⁶¹ This particular claim an insightful contrast to the reality, as historian Edward Lengel quotes a German report of the Marines’ first attack into Belleau Wood, who reported that they [the Germans] “were stunned by the clumsiness of the American tactics, which compared unfavorably with those employed by the adjoining French units that day.”²⁶² Similar articles gave the same enthusiastic reports of Marine gallantry from a British cartoonist who was in the area, as well as from Assistant Secretary of the Navy, Franklin D. Roosevelt.

When the war ended in November 1918, the Marines returned home and were often lauded as victors of the war in the press. Support from major political figures like Secretary of the Navy Josephus Daniels certainly helped. In December 1918, an article in the *New York Times* stated, “Daniels Tells How Marines Saved Paris,” with a sub-heading that read “American Boys, Bare-chested, Wiped out Machine-Gun Nests in Heroic Charge.”²⁶³ Historian Allan Millett argues that the publicity for Marines came at a cost. “The principal loss was the chance for harmony with the United States Army, for some of the army’s senior officers returned from the war convinced that the Marine Corps would do anything it could to belittle the regular army’s reputation.”²⁶⁴

²⁶¹ Martin Green, “Battle Between Devil Dogs and Prussian Guards,” *Recruiters’ Bulletin*, October 1918.

²⁶² Lengel, *Thunder in Flames*, 110.

²⁶³ “Daniels Tells How Marines Saved Paris,” *New York Times*, December 9, 1918.

²⁶⁴ Millett, *Semper Fidelis*, 318.

November 1918 also marked the end of the *Recruiters' Bulletin* in the form it had taken since 1914. In a final editorial, the Marines of the Publicity Bureau summed up the reasons why the *Recruiters' Bulletin* was no longer needed as well as its significance on the Corps during its run. "New rules and regulations have come into being. It is no longer a necessity for the Marine Corps to seek its men, to induce them to enter the great order of the Globe, Anchor, and Eagle. Through the provisions of the Selective Draft Act, those men will be waiting at the portals for their call to arms as they are needed, ready, eager, high-minded, strong: amply able to live up to every requirement and every tradition of the Corps we love."²⁶⁵ Here, of course, the editors of the *Recruiters' Bulletin* underestimated the effects of their promotion of the Marine Corps to the public as a whole. Indeed, the Corps had proven itself in combat in the World War and the newspapers strongly picked up where perhaps the *Recruiters' Bulletin* had lagged behind in the latter months of the war. However, just because there was a new mechanism for gaining recruits, the Corps still needed to manage its public image for the rest of the military establishment.

The *Recruiters' Bulletin* not only taught Marine recruiters and members of the public about the Marine Corps but also it provided a place where individuals who worked at the Publicity Bureau could learn more about the art of public relations and publicity. Marines such as Quartermaster Sergeant Percy Webb and Thomas Sterrett left a tremendous mark on the Corps' ability to conduct public relations, especially as it pertained to the "human interest stories" so sought after by newspapers. Historian Robert Lindsay considered Quartermaster Sergeant Percy Webb so important to the Corps' image, he dedicated an entire chapter to the Marine who was at the Publicity Bureau from

²⁶⁵ "Kismet," *Recruiters' Bulletin*, October 1918.

1916 to 1918.²⁶⁶ Sergeant Webb would go on to represent the Corps in the media through different mediums over the next decades and was considered the “Kipling of the Corps” because of his abilities in rhyme and poem. Along with Major Thomas Sterrett, Webb helped to pioneer the Corps’ approach to human interest stories. Webb is attributed to have said “Publicity must have an object...our aiming point...is to bring out the travel, adventure, and educational features of our service. Some of the Bureau stories don’t go over twenty-five words—some go as high as 150, and that’s about the maximum. There is one form of publicity that is “sure-fire” ninety-nine times out of a hundred: the personal item. Editors have written us many times telling us they can use all this kind of matter we send.”²⁶⁷

The former *Recruiters’ Bulletin* changed its name to the *Marines’ Bulletin* in November 1918, but only for a short period. When the draft ended after the war, the Corps again recognized the need to continue its work on attracting the “right” type of recruits. In December 1918, the *Marines’ Bulletin* published an article about the reasons why the Corps had publicity success in the war, written by reputed magazine editor William Almon Wolff. Wolff cited several factors that made the Corps’ publicity campaign particularly successful.

First, the Marines taught “all Americans to know a Marine at sight. They knew the product they had to advertise, of course. They knew that the Marines were the best possible advertisers of their Corps. They taught...to look for Marines among all the uniformed men who began crowding the streets soon after April 6, 1917. They taught all

²⁶⁶ Lindsay, *This High Name*, 18.

²⁶⁷ Lindsay, *This High Name*, 20.

Americans to do that; to recognize the globe, anchor and eagle, to know that a campaign hat that didn't have a cord belonged to a Marine. Second, Wolff attributes the Corps' focus on newspaper and magazine editors as an important factor. "They sent letters to every newspaper and magazine editor who handled photographs telling him how to identify Marines in the pictures that came to the desk, and urging him to see that the Corps was mentioned in the captions he wrote. So every Marine you saw became a living, walking advertisement for his Corps." Finally, Wolff recognized that the Corps sought a specific type of recruit and commended the Corps for their use of the "First to Fight" slogan as well as "Tell it to the Marines." "It did attract the cream and flower of American manhood. All the advertising and publicity, of course, made one thing very plain indeed—that getting to be a Marine wasn't easy."²⁶⁸

During the course of the war, the Marine Corps not only grew in numbers, from less than 25,000 Marines to a wartime high of 75,000, but the Corps' public image also grew in a tremendous fashion. The Corps' institutionalized publicity and recruiting strategies, which connected the elite service to hometowns through community-level public relations proved far more successful than was perhaps envisioned at the onset of the war. To the Corps' benefit, the language used in the newspapers to describe Marines was consistent with the way it had been since the War with Spain in 1898. Heroism, bravery, gallantry, and honor all continued to appear as descriptors of Marines in front of the American public. During the war, however, that language was often written and

²⁶⁸ William Almon Wolff, "Leading Advertising Experts Commend Success of Marines' Publicity Campaign," *Marines' Bulletin*, December 1918.

created by the Marines at the hometown level, an improvement on the Corps' earlier publicity strategies.

With Marines committed to the fight in Europe, the Marine Corps' Publicity Bureau chose the phrase "first to fight" as the Corps' call to recruits, finding tremendous success in attracting the type of men the Marines wanted in uniform. In Europe, the Marines fought bravely, and the results were widely publicized back home. The nickname "Devil Dogs" and the tremendous public reaction to the Battle of Belleau Wood all became part of the Corps' lasting legends and lore. While Marines only represented a small fraction of the forces present at the Battle of Belleau Wood, both the publishing of the Floyd Gibbons story and the Corps' well-established publicity machine raised the Corps' participation from a "solid defense" to preventing the fall of Paris. The Publicity Bureau and the *Recruiters' Bulletin* continued to disseminate recruiting ideas and discourse to the Marines' recruiting stations around the country, a tactic that truly embraced civil-military relations at the local level. Ultimately, it was the Corps' proactive stance on publicity and its ability to get the Marines name and activities into hometown newspapers around the country that helped the small service receive praise arguably far exceeding its own true potential on the battlefield.

CHAPTER III – PROGRESS, REFORM, AND LEGITIMACY: MAJOR GENERAL
JOHN A. LEJEUNE AND THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE MARINE CORPS’
PUBLIC IMAGE IN THE INTERWAR PERIOD

While the Great War represented a time of growth and prosperity for the U.S. military, the post-war environment proved far less friendly, particularly to the Marine Corps. The Corps’ participation in World War I greatly improved its image in the public, and the massive publicity efforts led by the Publicity Bureau and men like Major Thomas Sterrett brought a greater understanding among the public of the Corps’ history and roles within the military. Entering the interwar period, however, created new challenges for the Corps in terms of its future mission within the military as well as its continued attention to public image. The single most important shaper of Marine Corps’ public image during this period was Major General Commandant John Archer Lejeune. Lejeune’s experience with the Corps’ growth and changing roles since the 1880s allowed him the opportunity to continue the Corps’ rise to prominence.

Lejeune served as Commandant of the Marine Corps for nearly half of the interwar period, from 1920 to 1929 and was one of the longest serving commandants of the twentieth century, second only to Major General Charles Heywood, who served from 1891 to 1903. From 1929 to 1941, there were four other commandants, many of whom were Lejeune protégés themselves. This meant that it was largely Lejeune’s postwar leadership, reforms, and attention to the Corps’ public image that helped define the Marines’ interwar developments. While the Depression in the 1930s took a significant toll on the Marine Corps’ budget, and as a result, its reputation, Lejeune’s ability to legitimize the Marine Corps’ existence through both organizational reforms and a

continued focus on its public image helped the Marine Corps survive a particularly anti-military interwar period. While there is no doubt that it was the Second World War that officially brought the Marine Corps out of a dangerously thin era, without Lejeune's influence, the Marine Corps might not have prepared itself to be on the front lines of that war.

For a man so important to the U.S. Marine Corps, only a small group of historians have approached the difficult task of assessing his significance, especially as it pertains to the legitimization of the Marine Corps as a military service in the twentieth century. The keys to Lejeune's success were both his appreciation of the Corps' public image and his progressive approach toward leadership and military organization. This chapter will examine Lejeune's life and career and argues that Lejeune's progressive education and continued attention to the Corps' public image through education and fraternity saved the Corps from extinction as the military downsized to proportions dangerous to the Corps' effectiveness.

Throughout his tenure as Commandant of the Marine Corps, Major General John Archer Lejeune introduced sweeping changes in both training and warfare doctrine that solidified the Marine Corps' mission and its place within the U.S. military. While many different figures in military history played their own part in spurring doctrinal or organizational change, John Lejeune stood apart. The thirteenth Commandant of the Marine Corps employed ideas emblematic of the progressive movement and policies such as efficiency, economy, and education in order to continue the transformation of the Marine Corps that began in the late nineteenth century, and it was because of these principles that Lejeune was able to garner so much success.

Lejeune is remembered for his service in the First World War, for his skills and genius as a leader of Marines, and for his attention to Marine Corps traditions. Lejeune has reached a level of mythic proportions in today's Marine Corps. The general's combat experience as a division commander in the First World War and his expeditionary experience, along with his major accomplishments as commandant are well established. What is often forgotten, however, is that John A. Lejeune became one of the most accomplished commandants because of his loyalty to principles of the progressive movement, precisely during a period of extreme conservatism after the First World War. Lejeune succeeded in reforming and publicizing the Marine Corps amidst highly competitive interservice rivalries and in an atmosphere defined by massive drawbacks, budget cuts, and demobilization. Among all these factors, Lejeune continued to forge the future of the Marine Corps.

John Archer Lejeune was born on January 10, 1867, in Point Coupee, Louisiana, a small Mississippi River community and one of the oldest communities in Louisiana. The location of a major slave uprising in 1795, after the Civil War Point Coupee was still a hot point for racial tension, particularly in the atmosphere of the failed Reconstruction. At the time of his birth, Lejeune's father, Ovide Lejeune, was the owner of a cotton plantation in Point Coupee. By the first of his recollection, however, Ovide had gone bankrupt and was forced to sell his plantation. While he was able to buy back the home on the plantation, Ovide was relegated to sharecropping on his former plantation.²⁶⁹

In his memoir, Lejeune recalled the period from his first recollections through 1877 as a dark period for his family and for Louisiana. In his own words, "no Louisianan

²⁶⁹ John A. Lejeune, *The Reminiscences of Marine* (New York: Arno Press, reprint 1979), 22-24.

whose memory extends to all or a part of the ten-year period preceding 1877, can fail to have vivid recollection of the corruption, and the failure to function, of the state and local governments during that time. A combination of “carpet-baggers,” native white “scalawags,” and ignorant blacks filled the offices, drew their salaries, and either did nothing or worse than nothing for those who would not join them in misgoverning [the] state.”²⁷⁰ It was because of these factors that Lejeune’s father took up leadership in one of the local “Vigilance Committees.”²⁷¹ The Lejeune family’s Reconstruction experience continued to shape Lejeune’s views on race and the “Lost Cause” ideology well into his life, particularly after he retired from the Marine Corps.

While in Louisiana, Lejeune came in contact for the first time with a ship of the U.S. Navy. The USS *Alliance* cruised down the Mississippi River in 1880, and it stopped in Natchez, Mississippi where Lejeune was visiting. During his visit, Lejeune took notice of an officer on board who had a different uniform from the other sailors on the ship. As it happened, it was a Marine officer who Lejeune later found was First Lieutenant George F. Elliott, a Marine who went on to be the Commandant of the Marine Corps from 1903-1910.²⁷² In 1881, Lejeune started school at the Louisiana State University, which at the time was a men’s-only military school. While the school’s academics were in shambles at the time, Lejeune credited the school for teaching him the ways of military life, especially physical training. Lejeune stated that “I am confident that several years at a first-class military school or college would be of incalculable value to every American

²⁷⁰ Lejeune, *The Reminiscences of a Marine*, 25.

²⁷¹ In his memoir, Lejeune is cautious to note that the Vigilance Committee was not in the form of the Ku Klux Klan, though its aims seem to parallel those of the early Klan.

²⁷² Lejeune, *Reminiscences*, 30.

boy in fitting him to engage in life's arduous struggle and in preparing him to perform the duties of American citizenship in times of peace."²⁷³ Unfortunately, Lejeune was forced to drop out of LSU because him and his family could not afford the room and board demanded of its students. Lejeune looked toward the U.S. military academies as a way to get back into college and military life. While he preferred the U.S. Military Academy at West Point, there were no appointments available. There were, however, appointments available for the Naval Academy and his Congressman, Judge E.T. Lewis appointed him to the academy. After passing a number of arduous entrance exams, Lejeune entered the Naval Academy in 1884.²⁷⁴

Much like LSU, the Naval Academy that Lejeune entered in 1884 was far different than what it is today as it was in the throes of educational change and upheaval. The U.S. Naval Academy of the 1880s was embroiled in transitional politics in regards the type of education it provided. The U.S. Navy of the 1880s had not yet let go of the age of sail, even as the new age of steam had proven dominant at the outset of the Civil War. As such, the Naval Academy of the day immersed its midshipmen in the life of a sailor aboard a sailing ship of the previous era, focused on navigation, life at sea, and other tenets of seamanship in the age of sail. Historian Jennifer Steelman argues that by the late nineteenth century, the complexity and hazards of the new propulsion system raised serious questions about the efficiency and training of sailors. The traditional methods of shipboard training did not expose sailors to the newest technological

²⁷³ Lejeune, *Reminiscences*, 32-32.

²⁷⁴ Merrill L. Bartlett, *Lejeune: A Marine's Life, 1867-1942* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1991), 14-15.

skills.”²⁷⁵ As the progressive ideologies of professional education and expertise found their way into the military academies, it was only by the turn of the twentieth century, that schools such as the Naval Academy added technical training such as advanced engineering, however, “a tension remained between the competing philosophies of how best to produce professional officers.”²⁷⁶

When Lejeune and his classmates began their first year at the academy, they were sequestered to an old sailing ship in the harbor called the *Santee*. The cadets lived aboard the *Santee* for their first month, learning the language of sailors and the basics of sailing. Following their time on the *Santee*, the plebes went on a cruise for the summer on an old frigate off the shores of the Chesapeake and up to New England. Life aboard these vessels proved challenging for the plebes as they lived just as regular sailors had in the time of sail. Lejeune remembered that it was a “hard, rough, three months experience, an experience which the present-day midshipmen could not possibly visualize or comprehend.”²⁷⁷ The naval cadets of Lejeune’s class drank “dark-brown water which was obtained from the Dismal Swamp near Norfolk, Virginia” and ate salted meat, hard tack, and other sea fare.²⁷⁸

Lejeune’s experience at the Naval Academy, as he recalls it, consisted of long periods of hard labor, either at sea or aboard the *Santee*, combined with being hazed and difficult school work. Lejeune recalls a particular experience where he was bullied by a number of upperclassmen, to the point where it was noticed by an officer who offered

²⁷⁵ Jennifer Lyn Speelman, “Nautical Schools and the Development of United States Maritime Professionals, 1875-1941” (Temple University Dissertation, 2001), ix.

²⁷⁶ Speelman, “Nautical Schools,” ix.

²⁷⁷ Lejeune, *Reminiscences*, 41-42.

²⁷⁸ Lejeune, *Reminiscences*, 42.

retribution if Lejeune gave up the names of the offenders. Lejeune refused, and those same upperclassmen later protected him when he was targeted again. Lejeune's loyalty helped him make a good number of friends in the Class of 1888, many of whom became prominent figures in the navy and Marine Corps. In his memoir, Lejeune cites a list of those fellow graduates, which included Curtis D. Wilbur, who became Secretary of the Navy under President Calvin Coolidge; Charles F. Hughes, who was the Commander in Chief of the U.S. Fleet in the late 1920s, and Eli K. Cole, a Marine who was the Assistant to the Commandant of the Marine Corps. In this sense, the Naval Academy, despite Lejeune's ambivalence toward his time there, had a great influence on his career.²⁷⁹

Upon graduation, the naval cadets of the era were required to take part in a two-year cadet cruise, in order to familiarize themselves with the fleet activities of the U.S. Navy. By the end of the cruise and as a result of one particularly terrifying experience, Lejeune would definitively choose the Marine Corps for service and cast off the U.S. Navy as an option for his commissioning. A few months into his cruise, Lejeune's ship, USS *Vandalia*, anchored at the island of Samoa. In March 1889, a powerful cyclone moved in on the island. Lejeune was on watch that night and recounted that he was washed off his feet numerous times by enormous waves. There were seven warships in the harbor, including three American, one British, and three German vessels. By the morning, one ship had already sunk with a total loss of the crew, and the six remaining ships at anchor in the harbor began to drag their anchors and drift dangerously toward each other. By noon the next day, the USS *Vandalia* had run aground and the sea continued to beat the ship against the rocks. Lejeune saw first-hand the horrors the sea

²⁷⁹ Lejeune, *Reminiscences*, 43-47.

had to offer as he witnessed sailors and Marines drown or be washed overboard never to be seen again. Lejeune managed to climb the rigging and survive the ordeal. More than forty crewmen from the *Vandalia*, including the ship's captain, perished in the storm, which accounted for 95% of American casualties.

When Lejeune finally returned to Annapolis for his commissioning, he immediately chose the Marine Corps, no doubt partially influenced by his experience at sea. In his memoir, Lejeune also states that he “preferred the military to the naval side of my profession; I foresaw that the sail as a means of propulsion and the old-fashioned sailor would soon become extinct and be replaced more and more by machinery and more and more by men skilled in engineering;...I realized that whatever ability I had lay in the direction of handling and controlling men rather than in the direction and handling and controlling machinery.”²⁸⁰

As a graduate of the Naval Academy at the height of a period of progress and reformation, Lejeune entered a military service in transition, one of forward thought and upward mobility. These ideas, born from officers whom historian Peter Karsten has termed “armed progressives,” were indicative of the greater progressive movement and significant to Lejeune as a politician and military leader later in his life.²⁸¹

Peter Karsten's article titled “Armed Progressives” is key when approaching the topic of “Progressivism” and how to define what it meant for one to be a progressive in the military. In it, Karsten discusses the major changes that occurred in the army, navy, and National Guard during the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. Karsten

²⁸⁰ Lejeune, *Reminiscences*, 68-90.

²⁸¹ Peter Karsten, ed., *The Military in America: From the Colonial Era to the Present* (New York: Free Press, 1980).

concludes that during this period, “the U.S. Military underwent a virtual revolution...involving new missions, managerial and technological streamlining, professionalization, and sheer growth.”²⁸² Karsten goes on to describe how each of these factors affected policy and doctrine for the military services. What is missing, however, is how those principles affected the Marine Corps. It is easy to assume that, because the navy underwent serious changes, that the Marine Corps immediately followed suit, yet that is not the case.

The Marine Corps did undergo serious change during the same period, yet a far different transformation than that of the navy. As Jack Shulimson has comprehensively revealed in his book *The Marine Corps' Search for a Mission*, reform-minded commandants fought for the continued professionalization of Marine Corps officers, as well as a purpose for a Marine Corps attached to the “new navy.”²⁸³ While some have argued that the Naval Academy “failed to affect him,” Lejeune certainly learned a good many things from the state of the naval ranks, if not from the academy itself.²⁸⁴ As with any graduate of the Naval Academy during that time, Lejeune entered the ranks of a military service wrought with stagnation in its promotion system.

Most men who entered the navy had low expectations and faced certain consternation in trying to make a career out of the navy. These factors certainly weighed on Lejeune’s mind as he performed his post-graduation cruise and prepared to select

²⁸² Karsten, *Military in America*, 239.

²⁸³ Jack Shulimson, *The Marine Corps' Search for Mission, 1880-1898* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1993).

²⁸⁴ Merrill L. Bartlett, “John Archer Lejeune” in Allan R. Millett and Jack Shulimson, ed., *Commandants of the Marine Corps* (Annapolis: Naval Institute Press, 2004), 194-213.

which side of the naval service to join: the navy or the Marine Corps.²⁸⁵ In letters to his sister, Lejeune frequently commented on his place in line as he was promoted, keeping close track of his number on the promotion list.²⁸⁶ Lejeune's experience at the Naval Academy influenced his promotional ambition, along with his recognition for the necessity of political skill to rise within the ranks of the Marine Corps. The promotion system took a prominent place in Lejeune's mind as he not only mentioned personnel legislation in letters from the 1890s and 1900s, but also he went on to make that legislation a high priority as commandant.²⁸⁷ Lejeune thus graduated from the Naval Academy with a different mindset than those perhaps only a decade earlier. As Peter Karsten noted, progressive principles such as efficiency and professionalization had swept through the ranks of the navy, and young officers like Lejeune spent their early careers in partial fear of the antiquated promotion system, especially within the Marine Corps. The idea of efficiency in all sectors of the Marine Corps never left Lejeune's mind, and he as well as other navy and Marine Corps officers would spend their later careers trying to fix the problem that so plagued them early on.

John Lejeune's personality has been described in different ways, including ambitious, charming, strong-willed, folksy, and devoted. Lejeune's personality and southern charm put him in a good position to make friends and gain political prominence. In a later interview, General Thomas Holcomb, former aide-de-camp to the thirteenth

²⁸⁵ Letter to Augustine Lejeune, February 19, 1888, Folder 10, Container 3, Lejeune Papers, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

²⁸⁶ Letters to Augustine Lejeune, November 1, 1899, Folder 5, Container 4 and June 22, 1904, Folder 19, Container 4, Lejeune Papers, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

²⁸⁷ Letters to Augustine Lejeune, February 19, 1888, Folder 10, Container 3 and June 20, 1906, Folder 1, Container 5, Lejeune Papers, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

commandant, compared Lejeune to another commandant, Brigadier General George F. Elliott. Holcomb stated, “what separated politician Elliott, from statesman Lejeune, was that Lejeune fervently believed what most Americans merely paid lip service to. He was completely frank and unfailingly courteous to the elected and appointed officials who were responsible to oversee the military.”²⁸⁸ While Lejeune’s personality played an important role in his ability to make friends in Washington, the very fact that a military officer was so heavily involved in politics was also another product of the progressive movement in the military.

As both Karsten and Shulimson have discussed, the naval reform movement in the late nineteenth century began with an explicit recognition of the need for officers to garner external support for their causes, both personal or military. It was then, that “the officers of the ‘rising generation’ were in the van of the movement to demonstrate the importance of naval power to the public.”²⁸⁹ More importantly, “by the 1890s, all naval officers, young and old, were becoming adept at the art of lobbying.”²⁹⁰ Just as John A. Lejeune emerged from the Naval Academy, naval officers, with the support of leaders, including then retired Rear Admiral Alfred Thayer Mahan, began to reject the formerly “strictly apolitical habit” of military officers. Mahan “assured his active brethren that politics were the proper concern of naval progressives.”²⁹¹ So while Lejeune’s personality gave him an advantage in making friends in the highest echelons, the fact that he did so was only a recent development in the naval community. Lejeune’s statesmanship and his

²⁸⁸ Clayton Barrow, “Looking for John A. Lejeune” *Marine Corps Gazette*, (November 1990), 73.

²⁸⁹ Karsten, *Military in America*, 251.

²⁹⁰ Karsten, *Military in America*, 251.

²⁹¹ Karsten, *Military in America*, 252.

recognition of the need to insert himself, and eventually the Marine Corps as an institution, into the broader political structure became an important catalyst for the Corps' larger effort for public and congressional recognition.

Lejeune's ambitions led him to take every expeditionary post he was offered during the first decade of the twentieth century. During this period, Lejeune served on tours to Panama, the Philippines, and Japan. When he returned home, it was Brigadier General Elliott who offered Lejeune an opportunity that would inevitably serve to both form his conceptions of military structure and launch his career to the heights for which he had so hoped. Elliott recommended Lejeune for a position at the Army War College. In 1909, Lejeune entered one of the most rigorous schools in his career and immediately gained a sense of the true importance of education for military officers.²⁹² The War College gave Lejeune a chance to do some of his favorite things and served as a time during which the Marine lieutenant colonel could ride on horseback and contemplate warfare and the military. In his memoir, *The Reminiscences of a Marine*, Lejeune takes special care in noting the importance of this time for him.

In looking back on my career, it is perfectly apparent to me that the fourteen months at the War College constituted a very marked dividing line in my professional life, and that during the years that have followed the completion of the course, I have been conscious that I possessed greater mental power than I before realized, and have felt able to meet successfully any difficulty which might confront me, or to overcome any obstacle which I might find in my path.²⁹³

²⁹² Lejeune, *Reminiscences*, 187.

²⁹³ Lejeune, *Reminiscences*, 190.

Merrill Bartlett provides further insight into what the Army War College meant for Lejeune. Bartlett finds that until that time, Lejeune, while highly intelligent, lacked the “panache and élan” that other more celebratory Leathernecks did, so it was Lejeune’s success at the War College that separated him from the others.²⁹⁴ Lejeune’s War College experience also helped to legitimize him outside of navy-Marine Corps circles, a factor that would not only be important in regard to his leadership in the World War, but also to his commandancy and the Marine Corps writ large.

It was Commandant George Elliott who promoted Lejeune to lieutenant colonel, and Elliott played a major role in shaping Lejeune’s mind as well. Elliott not only raised the educational standards for the Marine Corps (a task Lejeune would expand during his commandancy), but also he helped to save the Marine Corps during one of the more dramatic unification debates in its history spurred on by President Theodore Roosevelt in 1909. During that episode, Elliott showed, for better or worse, the importance of political clout in defense of the Marine Corps.²⁹⁵ Thomas Holcomb recalled, “if Elliott, by thwarting one of the most willful U.S. Presidents, showed Lejeune how to wield political power, the teacher would live long enough (1931) to see his pupil outdo him.”²⁹⁶

Lejeune emerged from the War College confident in his abilities and of the support he garnered from political and military allies alike. For the next few years, Lejeune, as a lieutenant colonel, applied for the position of commandant twice as successor to both George Elliott and William Biddle, ignoring nearly ten line colonels in

²⁹⁴ Bartlett, *Lejeune*, 53.

²⁹⁵ Barrow, “Looking for Lejeune,” 73.

²⁹⁶ Barrow, “Looking for Lejeune,” 73.

front of him.²⁹⁷ The majority of Lejeune's official correspondence between 1910 and 1913 mention letters of support as well as his own lobbying for the commandancy.²⁹⁸ By this time, Lejeune, as a graduate of the Naval Academy and the Army War College achieved credibility among his peers in all of the major services, assuring that he would not be seen as solely as a Marine. This credibility, along with his political savvy proved significant for the Marine Corps' future. It was during his second application for commandant that Lejeune caught the eye of President Woodrow Wilson's Secretary of the Navy, Josephus Daniels. Daniels went on to play a significant role in Lejeune's career, yet their relationship developed as early as 1913.

Lejeune's time at the Army War College also taught him the importance of critical thought in a military service. In 1913, a number of Marine officers who were all coming up at the time, including Littleton W.T. Waller, George Barnett, Logan Feland, and Lejeune were all stationed together at Guantanamo Bay. During that period, these officers together decided to form an "association to promote the cause of the Marine Corps."²⁹⁹ In his own words, Lejeune described the role for the association's publication as a medium for the "dissemination of information concerning the aims, purposes, and deeds of the Corps, and an interchange of ideas for the betterment and improvement of its officers and men."³⁰⁰ That publication became the *Marine Corps Gazette* in 1916 and the Marine Corps Association continues to act as both a private archive of Marine Corps

²⁹⁷ Bartlett, *Lejeune*, 125.

²⁹⁸ John A. Lejeune, Professional Correspondence, Folders 11-15, Container 1, Lejeune Papers, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

²⁹⁹ David J. Bettez, *Kentucky Marine: Major General Logan Feland and the Making of the Modern USMC* (Lexington, KY: University Press of Kentucky, 2014), 65.

³⁰⁰ Barrow, "Looking for Lejeune," 72.

history as well as a forum for Marines to critique their service with the aim of making it better.

Woodrow Wilson's rise to the Presidency also played a critical role in Lejeune's ascension to commandant. Very outwardly a progressive, Woodrow Wilson's foreign policy took the Marine Corps to new heights as an integral service in the U.S. military. Over the course of his presidency, Wilson intervened seven different times in different countries across the world as well as in World War I.³⁰¹ Outside of the expedition to Vera Cruz in 1914, Lejeune's participation in the First World War would define much of his experience before his rise to the commandancy, yet the power of the publicity gained by the Marine Corps in Wilsonian foreign policy cannot be underestimated in allowing the Marine Corps to gain ground in both the government and public realms.

The progressive movement applies to many different areas significant to the military. Immediately out of the Naval Academy, Lejeune was subjected to different pressures because of the transformation between old and new. Promotional anxiety and political ambition are two of these factors, yet Progressivism also reached into organizational and managerial sectors. Beginning with the Army War College and extending through the rest of Lejeune's career, the Marine officer experienced the failures and successes of different leadership and management styles.³⁰² Lejeune's first major experience with Marine Corps organizational change was as Assistant Commandant to Commandant Major General George Barnett from 1915 to 1917. It was

³⁰¹ Frederick Calhoun, *Power and Principle: Armed Intervention in Wilsonian Foreign Policy* (Kent, OH: Kent State University Press, 1986), 2.

³⁰² Lejeune is, of course, well known for his success as a leader, which was exemplified and laid in brick and mortar with the establishment of the Lejeune Leadership Institute at Marine Corps University.

during this period that the Corps experienced significant personnel growth. It was General Barnett who managed to lobby the Marines into the First World War, but Lejeune played the role of administrator to the burgeoning Marine Corps.³⁰³

It is likely that after studying the German staff and education system, Lejeune first experienced the merits of progressive managerial style. Lejeune learned that in order to manage a rapidly expanding military service such as the Marine Corps, efficiency and economy of mobilization was of the utmost importance. The United States itself was in a unique position by 1917. As a neutral country, the American people played the part of “armchair observers,” to the mass mobilization that occurred in Europe. In his book, *Atlantic Crossings*, progressive historian Daniel Rodgers argues that “it was not war in and of itself but the economization of the struggle that mattered.” Germany’s successes in mobilization and England’s obstacles created a learning curve for American policy-makers.³⁰⁴ These principles, including efficiency and economy, proved very influential on Lejeune when he later took the commandancy.

John Lejeune’s success at the Army War College, along with his extensive expeditionary experience finally gained him the position he wanted in Europe as America took to war with Germany. Against the wishes of Barnett, who recognized Lejeune’s capabilities as an administrator, Lejeune deployed to Europe to be the first Marine officer to command an army division. According to Lejeune in his memoir, it was his request to join the war that served to spark Barnett’s suspicions as to Lejeune’s aims to take away

³⁰³ Bartlett, *Lejeune*, 63.

³⁰⁴ Daniel T. Rodgers, *Atlantic Crossings: Social Politics in a Progressive Age* (Cambridge: Belknap Press of Harvard, 1998), 280.

the commandancy.³⁰⁵ Lejeune's accomplishments as commander of the U.S. Army's 2nd Division in the American Expeditionary Force in Europe are well documented and certainly contribute to his mythic status. The war itself also provided a chance for Lejeune to directly view the power of publicity and public relations as Lejeune skillfully used both during his commandancy.

Lejeune and Josephus Daniels maintained a warm friendship throughout the war, writing each other numerous times, and, along with another famous Marine, Smedley Butler, they each supported each other in the political arena.³⁰⁶ Upon his return home, Lejeune took command of Marine Corps Base, Quantico and immediately began to employ some of the lessons he learned during the previous ten years. The year 1919 marked the beginning of the massive drawbacks in military spending and recruitment. Lejeune essentially returned to a situation much like that he had first entered out of the Naval Academy. The cost of the war in both money and blood forced public opinion of Wilson's party into decline. The Marine Corps, however, was a completely different institution than the fledgling service had born its name during the Gilded Age. Much to the army's chagrin, the Marines emerged from the World War heroes in their own right. Innovative publicity and a focus on educating the public about the Corps' actions in Europe had brought the Marines out of obscurity.

Lejeune continued to develop his managerial style, and in an interview with a newspaper in 1920, outlined his views on the importance of education in the military. Lejeune's familiarity with the virtues of Progressivism and social politics are particularly

³⁰⁵ Lejeune, *Reminiscences*, 241.

³⁰⁶ Bartlett, *Lejeune*, 110.

evident in this interview as Lejeune speaks of elevation through education in regard to his education reforms at Marine Corps Base, Quantico, which resembled the progressive mindset of solving the “great city problem.”

Education is the great need in America today. When all our people have been elevated through education, when they have a common viewpoint based on knowledge and experience, then they will act together for the solution of our problems and the strengthening of our democracy. Our new educational departure embraces also a correspondence school plan. Our facilities will be extended throughout the entire Corps. Whether a man is afloat or ashore, at home or abroad, he will be enabled through this plan to pursue his education. Special correspondence school courses have been arranged; we want not only a well-trained military organization but a well-educated group of American citizens. I can think of no better Americanization movement than this plan to take boys, who have not had the advantage of higher educational facilities at home, into the Marine Corps, and develop them through specialized vocational courses.³⁰⁷

General Holcomb also reflected on Lejeune’s approach to the Marine Corps’ education system. With a sense of somber remembrance, Holcomb recalled “We all went back to Quantico for demobilization. General Lejeune’s postwar plans were clear: he would rebuild the Marine Corps within the framework of his three “E’s”: Economy, Efficiency, and Education.”³⁰⁸ Here in this philosophy, it is easily apparent how Lejeune’s experiences at the Army War College, as Assistant Commandant, as a division commander during the war, and as a progressive shaped his postwar philosophy.

³⁰⁷ Charles W. Duke, “Never Loses His Temper, Although He Does Get Fighting Mad: An Interview with Gen. Lejeune, New Commander of the Marines” The Magazine Section, *Public Ledger* (Philadelphia, PA: Sunday, August 1, 1920).

³⁰⁸ Barrow, “Looking for Lejeune,” 75.

Lejeune's political allies, including Daniels and Butler proved stronger than Major General Barnett could compete with, and in 1921, Lejeune was promoted to Major General and named the thirteenth Commandant of the Marine Corps. Lejeune's political alliance was in fact so strong, that General Barnett felt he had been deceived and betrayed by a man he called his friend. In a later interview, the twentieth Commandant of the Marine Corps, Clifton Cates, Barnett's aide-de-camp during the change of command in 1920, commented on Lejeune's dilemma. "I could see Lejeune's dilemma: Both Barnett and Daniels were extremely close friends of his but mortal enemies of each other. And, if 'the enemy of my enemy is my friend,' does that make the friend of my enemy my friend still or is he now my enemy? Perhaps what it really does, as General Lejeune discovered, is it 'ties your hands' when your friends' interests collide."³⁰⁹³¹⁰

John A. Lejeune's commandancy is not sufficiently addressed in much of the scholarship regarding his life. Lejeune's wartime experience is usually chief among the annals of his own histories. Perhaps this is because Lejeune only dedicated 25 pages of his nearly 500-page memoir to his time (nearly a decade) at the helm of the Marine Corps, leaving historians with little of Lejeune's own recollections. It could also be argued that much of Lejeune's commandancy is ignored because it happened during a period in which Marines did not achieve much of military interest to outside observers. The Corps, however, began solidifying its advanced base defense doctrine during this period, developed the Marine Expeditionary Force, guarded the mail, and fought in

³⁰⁹ Barrow, "Looking for Lejeune," 70.

³¹⁰ The phrase "ties your hands," is in direct mention to Lejeune's response to General Barnett after he was chewed out during the change of command ceremony. Lejeune is quoted as saying, "George, my hands were tied" in Barrow, "Looking for Lejeune," 70.

Russia and the Caribbean. Perhaps the most important events, both for the evolution and publicity of the Marine Corps, however, were a series of training maneuvers and organizational changes to be discussed later in this chapter. While Lejeune's wartime achievements catch the attention of an audience, it was his leadership in progressive organizational change, training, and public reinforcement that left a lasting impression on the Corps. Much like the oft forgotten importance of logistics and staff work in wartime, Lejeune's organizational leadership built a lasting Marine Corps with a clear mission for the future.

Through the lobbying of Josephus Daniels as well as Smedley Butler and his father, Lejeune took the reins of the Marine Corps as a progressive in a conservative era. This is where Lejeune steps ahead of many other progressive minded military officers. As Peter Karsten notes in his discussion on armed progressives, the majority of these officers who emerged into the transformational environment of the 1880s and 1890s did not carry their progressive virtues on with them past their time as junior officers. Once they achieved the ranks they desired, all need for reform and progress was no longer an issue.³¹¹ Lejeune, along with his 1888 classmates Eli K. Cole and later Secretary of the Navy Curtis D. Wilbur, though, forged ahead and continued reforms for both the navy and the Marine Corps into the 1930s.³¹² The views of the presidents under which Lejeune served did not phase the Marine. In his memoir, Lejeune praises and admires Calvin Coolidge's management style, a testament to Lejeune's dedication to the principles of management.³¹³

³¹¹ Karsten, *Military in America*, 256.

³¹² James W. Hammond, Jr., "When 88 had the Helm" *Shipmate* (July-August 1984), 16-17.

³¹³ Lejeune, *Reminiscences*, 480.

John Archer Lejeune was a product of the period in which he entered the U.S. Marine Corps. His graduation from the U.S. Naval Academy during a time of intense transformation and reform led Lejeune to form his own opinions and ideas regarding a solution to the problem at hand. In a progressive atmosphere, Lejeune began his military service paying close attention to how the navy and Marine Corps worked out problems regarding promotions. Lejeune also took advantage of a relatively new habit within military circles, the use of political savvy, and, in his case, southern charm, to lobby for both his own career and for the future of the U.S. Marine Corps.

Lejeune's experience at the Army War College and as assistant to the commandant of the Marine Corps all contributed to his future approach to military organization and management. Using progressive principles such as his "three E's": efficiency, economy, and education, Lejeune maintained a progressive mindset even on into his commandancy under a conservative administration. Lejeune was indeed an exceptional officer and significant figure in the U.S. Marine Corps, yet history has paid little attention to some of his most important achievements. Major General Lejeune never forgot the importance of keeping the Marine Corps in the public eye during his commandancy. Perhaps due to the success of the publicity bureaus during the 1910s or perhaps due to Admiral Mahan's call to keep the navy in the limelight, Lejeune oversaw some of the Marine Corps' most important interwar activities in view of the public. Even though the Marine Corps conducted landings and actions in Nicaragua and Haiti in the early 1920s, Lejeune sought to bring the Corps before the public in the U.S.

When Lejeune took command of the Marine Corps as commandant in 1920, he immediately implemented his "three E's" policy. Lejeune paid close attention to the

administrations before him and he noticed that during the Elliott, Biddle, and Barnett commandancies, the headquarters staffs had become virtual fiefdoms in their own right.³¹⁴ “Lejeune chose instead to reorganize the staff of Headquarters, Marine Corps and, in the process to eclipse the power of the principal staff officers. What the new commandant sought was a staff that responded to direction from his office to the demands and requirements of the Marine Corps at large.”³¹⁵ In his memoir, Lejeune recalled his approach to organization:

It was necessary, too, that efficiency go hand in hand with economy, and I, therefore, bent my energies towards the adoption of policies and the execution of plans which would promote the steady upbuilding of that essential attribute. To succeed in the campaign for economy and efficiency, it was first necessary to obtain the enthusiastic and loyal cooperation of the officers and men. This was obtained, not only by means of official communications and orders and by personal correspondence and personal interviews, but also by frequent conferences which were attended by the officers on duty at headquarters.³¹⁶

Lejeune also split headquarters into different sections including aviation, military education, recruiting, training, intelligence, and planning. Lejeune conceived the planning section while he was assistant to the commandant prior to World War I, yet Barnett did not heed his advice. The planning section was a top priority to Lejeune because he believed that readiness was pivotal in maintaining a status quo in foreign affairs.³¹⁷

³¹⁴ Bartlett, *Lejeune*, 148.

³¹⁵ Bartlett, *Lejeune*, 148.

³¹⁶ Lejeune, *Reminiscences*, 461

³¹⁷ Bartlett, *Lejeune*, 149.

Lejeune was a man of the Wilson Administration. He was a Daniels man. Yet the most important era of Lejeune's career as it pertains to the Marine Corps itself began with the Warren G. Harding administration. Harding was elected on a conservative platform, largely abandoning the successes of the progressive movement. Lejeune's combat experience and political prowess, however, convinced Harding and his Secretary of the Navy, Edwin Denby to keep the Marine as commandant. Denby himself had enlisted in the Marine Corps at the ripe age of 35, in order to play what part he could in the mobilization for World War I.

Commandant Lejeune's focus on education played a significant role in the Corps' legitimization throughout the 1920s. One of the most important actions Lejeune undertook was to create the Marine Corps Institute in February 1920. The Marine Corps Institute (MCI) embodied Lejeune's call to "elevate through education."³¹⁸ The MCI was largely conducted as a correspondence school through the International Correspondence Schools in Scranton, PA. Through the MCI, Marines ranging from privates through officers could get a free education no matter where they were stationed in the world. What separated the MCI from many of the educational reforms of the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries was its focus not just on the duties Marines carried out day-to-day, but to offer the Marine a chance to gain promotion through education or prepare for a career outside of the military.

In the late 1880s, the Marine Corps established the School of Application, which was considered a particularly reformist approach to the problem of poorly trained enlisted

³¹⁸ Leo J. Daugherty III, *Counterinsurgency and the United States Marine Corps: Volume 1, The First Counterinsurgency Era, 1899-1945* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland & Company, Inc., 2015), 345.

men throughout the Corps. The School of Application was offered to all of the rank and file of the Marine Corps; however, it was focused on “classes and practical exercises in infantry tactics, gunnery instruction, torpedoes, high explosives, ‘field service and modern tactics,’ and field entrenchments.”³¹⁹ These education reforms were aimed at solving a problem different from the one Lejeune had identified in the 1920s: technology. In the 1880s, the navy had begun a tremendous overhaul toward steel and steam ships, and the skills necessary to operate these ships had changed dramatically, down to the enlisted man. The Marine aboard navy ships played an important role in this technological revolution as they played the part of gunners and gunnery experts, a field highly affected by modernization. Thus, the School of Application provided that officers, noncommissioned officers, and “other enlisted men of sufficient intelligence,” “would receive instruction in logarithms, solutions of plane triangles, and the practical use in the field of angle-measuring instruments in making military reconnaissances and hasty surveys.”³²⁰

The types of courses held at the MCI in 1920, however, separated it from previous efforts to educate enlisted personnel such as the School of Application. In an article from the *Dearborn Independent* republished in *Leatherneck Magazine* in October 1921, the breakdown of subjects studied by the MCI’s 4,000 students that year displayed the truly broad range of education accessible to these Marines. The most popular course was automobile mechanics with over 700 Marines enrolled. Second was electrical engineering with over 400 Marines enrolled. Over 200 Marines enrolled in a course called

³¹⁹ Jack Shulimson, “Daniel Pratt Mannix and the Establishment of the Marine Corps School of Application, 1889-1894.” *Journal of Military History* (October 1991), 473.

³²⁰ Shulimson, “Mannix,” 476.

salesmanship, “with a view of getting jobs as traveling salesmen after their careers on the briny deep are a closed incident of their lives.”³²¹ Other subjects included: plumbing, mining and metallurgy, concrete engineering, structural engineering, civil engineering, banking, commercial law, business management, commerce, higher accounting, railroad accounting, traffic management, civil service, general English, chemistry, pharmaceuticals, architecture, and many others.³²² The MCI also offered courses in foreign languages, art, illustration, culinary arts, and other sectors of the arts. The MCI had a faculty of over 100 Marine and civilian instructors who were all themselves graduates of the correspondence school. The Marine Corps also designated a special officer aboard every ship of the navy to help the men enrolled in the courses and to allow them time to complete their work.³²³

The MCI was created to help Marines become more advanced not just at their jobs in the Marine Corps but also in their futures outside the military. This principle is perhaps best explained by Lejeune’s friend and mentor and former Secretary of the Navy, Josephus Daniels. Daniels also believed strongly in the importance of education in social progress, and he applied those beliefs to the navy. In an article aimed toward the young officers of the navy in 1913, Daniels said “Remember that the enlisted man today is a man who has been touched with the spirit of modern progress. He is just as ambitious as you are. He is wide-awake. He may have been taking advantage of the facilities of the

³²¹ H.O. Bishop, “Marine Corps Institute is Training Fighters in the Arts of Peace While in Service,” *Dearborn Independent*, October 29, 1921, republished in *Leatherneck Magazine*, December 1921.

³²² H.O. Bishop, “Marine Corps Institute is Training Fighters in the Arts of Peace While in Service,” *Dearborn Independent*, October 29, 1921, republished in *Leatherneck Magazine*, December 1921.

³²³ H.O. Bishop, “Marine Corps Institute is Training Fighters in the Arts of Peace While in Service,” *Dearborn Independent*, October 29, 1921, republished in *Leatherneck Magazine*, December 1921.

present day for advancement, such as the night school and the correspondence school. He does not consider that his education has ended. He is not at the end of his goal. Indeed, he may be only beginning to run his race in life.”³²⁴

While the core tenets of the MCI were not necessarily unique to the Marine Corps, the education of Marines nevertheless played a significant role in the development of the Corps’ public image after World War I. Major General Commandant Lejeune’s goal with the MCI was to provide for all Marines to have the option of an education that would serve them after their service to the Corps. Lejeune knew that the public image of the Marine was as important, and in fact, the same as the public image of the Marine Corps. Just as important to Lejeune was the idea that the MCI might have the ability to educate Marines into more promotions, a sign for Lejeune of progress in the service. Having fought the promotion system since his time as a young officer, Lejeune’s education policies were also aimed at elevating Marines in their own service. That the MCI has operated in different forms up to the day of this writing is a testament to its importance and Lejeune’s foresight.

During the first year of Lejeune’s commandancy, an ongoing scandal involving the Marines’ treatment of Haitians during the intervention there threatened to mar his and the Marine Corps’ image. In Haiti, the American military government set up a Gendarmerie, consisting of both Haitian and American personnel to be dispersed among the people in order to keep the peace. According to Haitian officials in their complaint

³²⁴ Josephus Daniels, “Education of the Naval Life,” *The Journal of Education*, Vol. 78, No. 10 (1913), 260.

against the American occupation, the reality of the Gendarmerie was against the principles upon which it was built and ultimately put Haitians in harm's way.³²⁵

In the Congressional testimony from the investigation into the occupation of Haiti and Santo Domingo in 1921, the Haitian representative, Mr. Stenio Vincent, stated that “as a general rule, the American officers of the gendarmerie are privates (in the American Marine Corps) who have been made officers in Haiti, and who have had nothing but a most elementary education, which naturally renders them incapable of any military training.”³²⁶ In her study of the American occupation in Haiti, Historian Mary Renda, too, attributed many of the issues of violence and paternalism not only to the fact that young privates were put into a position of command over Haitians, but also that many of these Marines were southern, thereby carrying with them the bias of white men in the American South toward the “uncivilized” Haitian people.³²⁷ The accusations from Haiti included reports of abuse and murder and the use of the “corvee system,” which those in Haiti considered a prison labor system. It was primarily employed to build a better system of roads for military use in the rural regions so that Marines could travel faster and in greater numbers toward (or away) from conflict.³²⁸

It is entirely possible that the Marines used the same system of governing in Haiti (violence and labor included) since the beginning of the occupation in 1915. What changed, however, by 1919, was that President Woodrow Wilson's own message about

³²⁵ “Inquiry into Occupation and Administration of Haiti and Santo Domingo, Vol. 1,” *Senate Committee on Haiti and Santo Domingo* (5 August - 16 November 1921), 14. Accessed on ProQuest Congressional Database, 9 January 2018.

³²⁶ “Inquiry into Occupation and Administration of Haiti and Santo Domingo,” 15.

³²⁷ Mary Renda, *Taking Haiti: Military Occupation and the Culture of U.S. Imperialism, 1915-1940* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2001), 146.

³²⁸ “Inquiry into Occupation and Administration of Haiti and Santo Domingo,” Vol 1, 82.

the self-determination of nations had spread throughout the world. There is no doubt that those in Haiti received the message loud and clear. In their testimony, the Haitian representatives stated “from the point of view of international law it is plain that the Wilson government had no right to order an invasion of Haitian territory and to take possession of that small and friendly country.” President Wilson himself, at almost the same time, proclaimed that “all the Governments of the Americas are, as far as we are concerned, upon a footing of perfect equality and unquestioned independence,” and that “no nation should seek to extend its policy over any other nation or people, but that every people should be left free to determine its own policy, its own way of development, unhindered, unthreatened, unafraid, the little along with the great and powerful.”³²⁹ Many of these words were taken directly from President Wilson’s speech to the Senate on 22 January 1917 called the “Monroe Doctrine of the World,” in which Wilson described the entire world as being “off limits” to foreign powers just as President James Monroe described the Western Hemisphere in 1823. This speech began to outline some of the principles of non-interference later described in Wilson’s Fourteen Points speech.

The public outcry over Marine activities in Haiti in early 1920 was sparked by the leak of comments from an unedited letter by Marine Commandant George Barnett related to an investigation into violence there. Barnett had called for an investigation, led by Colonel John H. Russell, into the mistreatment of Haitians by U.S. Marines. In the letter from Barnett to Russell, Barnett sought clarification of an off-hand remark made by the defense attorney of a Marine on trial for murder. The lawyer stated that he believed “neither his client, nor Private McQuilkin, should be judged too harshly for their actions,

³²⁹ “Inquiry into Occupation and Administration of Haiti and Santo Domingo,” Vol 1, 4.

for they were merely following a general custom.”³³⁰ This was, of course, a startling comment given the charge, and Commandant Barnett rightly queried Russell immediately. Barnett wrote, “the court martial of one private for the killing of a native prisoner brought out a statement by his counsel that showed me that practically indiscriminate killing of the natives has gone on for some time.”³³¹ It was only five months before the presidential election of 1920, and this was a bombshell revelation when it reached the American press. This was, by no means, an unwarranted public reaction. However, in his response to the press, Barnett argued that he was not claiming “indiscriminate killing of the natives” actually happened, but instead was querying Colonel Russell about the way it came across. This response further fueled speculation, and Presidential Candidate Senator Warren G. Harding led the charge against Wilson’s military leaders.³³²

When Lejeune succeeded Barnett as commandant in July 1920, he took it upon himself to begin a publicity campaign to silence critics of the Marine Corps’ occupation in Haiti. According to his memoir, Lejeune stated that he “requested Secretary Daniels to authorize me to proceed to Haiti and Santo Domingo for the purpose of inspecting the Marines and of familiarizing myself with conditions as they then existed there.”³³³ Lejeune brought celebrity Marine Smedley Butler with him on his tour and visited nearly every Marine garrison in both countries. As Lejeune remembers his own assessment of Marines there, “the reputation of the...Marine Corps... who have served Haiti can well

³³⁰ Renda, *Taking Haiti*, 160.

³³¹ Renda, *Taking Haiti*, 160.

³³² Renda, *Taking Haiti*, 160.

³³³ Lejeune, *Reminiscences*, 466.

afford to rest on the comparison between conditions as they exist now [1936] and as they existed fifteen years ago. In the impartial tribunal of history I am confident that the verdict will be, 'Well done, good and faithful servants.'³³⁴ Newspapers of the time hung on a line in Lejeune's post-tour report, in which he claimed that "Peace and tranquility prevail through Haiti."³³⁵ Even though Candidate Warren Harding declared in September 1920 that "this [Wilson] government is waging... 'unconstitutional warfare' in Haiti, as President, Harding kept Lejeune as Commandant of the Marine Corps and also kept Marines in Haiti."³³⁶

In terms of newspaper reporting, after Lejeune's tour of Haiti and claims of peace and tranquility, articles in the major papers regarding Haiti were slim. Lejeune, however, continued to reinforce to the American public the idea of Haitians as uncivilized and unhuman. In a letter to the United States Marine League of Chicago in March 1921, Lejeune spoke of deep rooted cannibalism in Haiti after reports surfaced of two Marines who were left behind after an ambush were found torn to pieces and displayed for all to see.³³⁷ Chesty Puller, a Marine of tremendous fame and veteran of Haiti, claimed to have investigated their fates. After speaking with several "minor Caco chiefs," one of them told him "We were four chiefs to make the sacrifice. As always we took off the head from the Lieutenant, and cut up his body...Then we opened the chest...and took out the heart. It was very large. And we ate of it, each of the four chiefs, to partake of the

³³⁴ Lejeune, *Reminiscences*, 469.

³³⁵ "Peace Prevails Through Haiti: So Declares Commandant of Marine Corps," *Los Angeles Times*, October 6, 1920. The same article had a sub-headline that read "Still Essential Though to Keep Troops on Duty."

³³⁶ Justin Fair, "Gen. Lejeune in Haiti: Marine Head on Secret Mission to Sift Slavery," *Washington Post*, September 19, 1920.

³³⁷ "Cacos Gain Courage by Eating Marines: Gen. Lejeune Tells of Voodoo Practices of Cannibals in Haiti," *Los Angeles Times*, April 5, 1921.

courage of your Lieutenant Muth.”³³⁸ It is not entirely clear as to whether these events occurred, but under Lejeune’s leadership, the Corps sought to build sympathetic press surrounding their activities in Haiti.

American evangelicals helped to provide at least one way in which the public perceived the Marines in Haiti as beneficial. Reverend Dr. Arthur R. Gray, the Secretary for Latin America of the Board of Missions of the Protestant Episcopal Church wrote an opinion piece in the *New York Times* in June 1919 in which he declared that “United States Marines in Haiti and the Dominican Republic are real and effective missionaries.”³³⁹ Dr. Gray went on to discuss the importance in particular of the infrastructure improvements being completed by the Marines in Haiti. “A detachment of marines is an important part of that force, a number of them having been appointed officers in charge of the native constabulary. They protect the people from brigands, build roads from one town to another, repair and keep clean the city streets and aid in projects to improve sanitation,” work that Dr. Gray cited “is real missionary work and prepares the way for the missionaries later sent out by the various churches.”³⁴⁰ The argument made by Dr. Gray is similar to those made in Germany for the autobahn and in the United States with the national highway system, in which modern infrastructure serves not only a military purpose, but also helps to connect rural and urban population centers. For the Marine Corps, this meant it was easier to quickly respond to outbreaks of violence, to Dr. Gray and the missionary community, this meant evangelical advantages.

³³⁸ Burke Davis, *Marine! The Life of Lieutenant General Lewis B. “Chesty” Puller, USMC (Ret)*, (Boston: Little Brown, 1962), 44.

³³⁹ Dr. Arthur R. Gray, “Missionary Marines,” *New York Times*, June 8, 1919.

³⁴⁰ Dr. Arthur R. Gray, “Missionary Marines,” *New York Times*, June 8, 1919.

In either scenario, the Marines benefited in the public eye from the support of the evangelical community.

While the Marine Corps received positive press, especially in the newspapers for most of their activities in the Caribbean during those 20 years, it appears that the duty in the Caribbean—the small wars, occupations, police actions, interventions, counterinsurgencies—did not age well, both for Marines and the Corps itself. Without the relative shelter of President Wilson’s paternalist attitude and “intervention-for-the-sake-of-democracy” rhetoric, the Corps languished in the same places, fighting the same peoples for years. The occupation in Haiti started in 1915 and Marines did not leave there until 1936, only to return again in the 1990s. The Marine Corps “landed” in Nicaragua nine separate times from 1900-1930. In his many public speeches as commandant, Major General Lejeune told of the Corps’ history dozens of times all over the country and for many different audiences.

While the Marine Corps was often assigned expertise in what was then called “small wars,” the 1920s, under the leadership of John A. Lejeune, was a period in which the Marine Corps sought missions far beyond the occupations and police actions of the Caribbean. General Lejeune led an army infantry division in combat in Europe during the First World War and Commandant Lejeune sought a mission for the Marine Corps that positioned the Marines as assault troops in major future campaigns, especially as they were tied to the U.S. Navy’s war plans.

One of the side effects of such a deadly World War was also that some in the public were no longer lured by the soldierly duties, battles, and bloodshed. In order to promote the Marine Corps while simultaneously downplaying it as a military service,

Lejeune developed an advanced sports program in order to promote the Marine Corps through athletics. “The effect of the new athletic policy as originated and promulgated by the Major General Commandant has been far reaching in proving to the public that the Marine Corps is abreast of the times in a matter which is of common interest as well as to the interest of the future of the Corps from an advertising standpoint.”³⁴¹ In 1921, with the help of well-known Marine Smedley Butler, Lejeune turned the Marine Corps base at Quantico into an exhibition of sorts. Lejeune ordered the Marine Corps baseball and football teams to play games against major college teams (and fared quite well) in a show of the Corps’ athletic prowess.³⁴²

Lejeune also found publicity for the Marine Corps during this period as the Marine East Coast Expeditionary Brigade began re-enacting Civil War battles each fall. Lejeune had experience in analyzing Civil War battles from his time at the Army War College. Brigadier General Smedley Butler described these exhibitions as training exercises as well as excellent opportunities for good publicity. During the first reenactment of the Battle of the Wilderness in 1921, Butler reportedly sought out the burial location of Stonewall Jackson’s arm (buried by itself) in a publicity stunt meant to prove that the burial of the arm was just a rumor. Upon finding the actual remains of a shattered arm under its monument, Butler reburied it in a metal box and erected a bronze marker at the site to verify its existence.³⁴³ Even President Harding attended the Corps’ reenactment and it became such a success that further maneuvers of the same type

³⁴¹ Robert Lindsay, *This High Name: Public Relations and the U.S. Marine Corps* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1956), 39.

³⁴² Bartlett, *Lejeune*, 154

³⁴³ Kenneth L. Smith-Christmas, “Marines at the Battle of the Wilderness,” *Leatherneck Magazine*, (September 2014).

continued: Gettysburg (1922), New Market (1923), and Antietam (1924).³⁴⁴ These types of actions, while rather insignificant in the chronicles of Marine Corps history, kept the Corps in the press even while money and men were on the decline.

On November 1, 1921, General Lejeune created a Marine Corps tradition that is perhaps one of his most enduring contributions to the Corps' public image. Lejeune issues Marine Corps Order 47, which is considered the first Commandant's Marine Corps "Birthday Message." Until this time, the Corps' "birthday" was not only a topic of some debate, but generally reserved as a time to recount the Corps' history and not otherwise considered with much reverence. In his order, Lejeune described the "spirit" of the Marine Corps that helped to define its public image for the next century.

This high name of distinction and soldierly repute we who are Marines today have received from those who preceded us in the corps. With it we also received from them the eternal spirit which has animated our Corps from generation to generation and has been the distinguishing mark of Marines in every age. So long as that spirit continues to flourish, Marines will be found equal to every emergency in the future as they have been in the past, and the men of our Nation will regard us as worth successors to the long line of illustrious men who have served as "Soldiers of the Sea" since the founding of the Corps.³⁴⁵

With this message, Lejeune sought to assure every Marine, present or former, that they were of a special sort. Lejeune argued that the Marine Corps had its own spirit that separated it as an institution from the other military services.

Despite the tight budgets and low quotas for the Marine Corps in the 1920s, the Marines thrived in popular culture and Commandant Lejeune largely supported and

³⁴⁴ Bartlett, *Lejeune*, 154.

³⁴⁵ John A. Lejeune, Marine Corps Order 47, November 1, 1921.

facilitated their representations in the public sphere. Recruiting ads across the country lured interested men with themes of adventure, travel, and the ability to see action. One such ad in the *San Francisco Chronicle* had the headline “WHERE ROMANCE AND ADVENTURE FLOURISH STILL: Travel by Land and Sea to the Picturesque Places of the World – Afforded by the United States Marine Corps.”³⁴⁶ If the Corps’ experience in the “small wars” did not aid its future mission militarily, it certainly provided a global canvass for the recruiting campaigns. In one advertisement, the recruiters mentioned the possibility that recruits may be assigned to places like Guam, Haiti, Hawaii, China, Cuba, Great Britain, France, the Philippines, and Panama. Adorning the first lines of the advertisement was a witty poem:

If you’re tired of the factory
Or you’re weary of the plow,
And you don’t find any romance
In the job you’re doing now.
Here’s a chance to go a-roving
To the place Adventure’s found
So come a-runnin’ buddy.
When you hear the bugles sound.
They’re cheering from the ferries.
And they’re waving from the shore.
The dull old life’s behind us
And the new life lies before.
We’re off to make talk “howdy:
With the More and Chinees.

³⁴⁶ “Where Romance and Adventure Flourish Still,” *San Francisco Chronicle*, February 4, 1920.

The Marines have got their orders,

And they're putting out to sea.³⁴⁷

The message of the advertisement was clear. Those who were living their lives in the factories, offices, and even fields could find true adventure, the same kind you could find in a good book, in service with the U.S. Marine Corps.

The Marine Corps' Western Recruiting District published another advertisement in the *San Francisco Chronicle* the following day, this time aimed squarely at veterans of the Great War. The headline read, "EX-SERVICE MEN HEAR THE CALL OF THE OLD LIFE: Former Soldiers and Sailors Find Civil Life Too Tame. They Are Joining the Marine Corps, Combines the Desirable Features of Both Army and Navy."³⁴⁸ Adventure and travel are featured in this article as well, though it also emphasizes education and job-training as well as exercise and healthy living. With those veterans in mind, the advertisement focused on all the things a veteran might miss about the service.

"Remember those days when we were fit as fiddles, could eat the hind leg off a table and enjoy it, could lick our weight in wildcats and weren't afraid to say so. And remember the buddies who bunked with us, hiked with us, scrapped with us, took all our money, bummed our tobacco, called us bad names and—would give us the shirts of their backs if we asked, eh? Somehow civil life doesn't often give us friends like that. The man who has never done a hitch in the service has missed a lot. Isn't that so?"³⁴⁹ When speaking of the mysteries of service in wartime, the concept of the "Band of Brothers" is ever

³⁴⁷ "Where Romance and Adventure Flourish Still," *San Francisco Chronicle*, February 4, 1920.

³⁴⁸ "EX-SERVICE MEN HEAR THE CALL OF THE OLD LIFE," *San Francisco Chronicle*, February 5, 1920.

³⁴⁹ "EX-SERVICE MEN HEAR THE CALL OF THE OLD LIFE," *San Francisco Chronicle*, February 5, 1920.

constant, and the Marines knew that veterans of the service were not only already experienced in military life, but that they might add further to the quality of Marines overall.

In 1924, two *New York World* writers, Maxwell Anderson and Laurence Stallings created the play *What Price Glory?* for Broadway. *What Price Glory?* was a comedic drama featuring two Marines, Captain Flagg and Sergeant Quirt, which took place in France, both at the front and behind the lines. The story revolves around their competition for the love of a French woman. Stallings was a former Marine who served in France and lost a leg after he was shot in the thigh in battle. Stallings brought a realistic portrayal of the absurdities of military life in the First World War, which contained the same type of humor one might find in the 1980s British sitcom *Blackadder Goes Forth*.³⁵⁰

What Price Glory? was extraordinarily popular for the time (running for 299 shows), however it initially gained notoriety due to its outward vulgarity. When the show opened at the Plymouth Theatre in New York City in September 1924, Mayor John Francis Hylan immediately launched a police investigation into that play and others then showing on Broadway. On September 24, plain clothes police sat in on the showing and according to *Variety* “Save for a quiet tip given Arthur Hopkins, producer of “Glory,” the descent of the police on the Plymouth...was a surprise. The manager was informed there might be arrests, that being the clear assumption because of the plainclothes men in the audience and inspectors backstage. Hopkins made no effort to keep the latter from behind

³⁵⁰ Lea Jacobs, “Men Without Women: The Avatars of *What Price Glory*,” *Film History*, Volume 17 (2005), 314.

the scenes, but he ordered the changing of oaths in the play. Exactly 12 words or terms were deleted.”³⁵¹

The intense public reaction to both the vulgarity and popularity of the show brought the Marine Corps much press. Under a subheading “Marines in Favor” in entertainment magazine, *Variety*, it was noted that “a number of Marine officers had already witnessed the performance, and favored it, while Mrs. Barnett, wife of Major General Barnett, who was formerly in charge of the Marine Corps, and praised “Glory.” Mrs. Barnett has been affectionately known as the “Mother of the Marines.”³⁵² *Variety* approached Marine Corps officials regarding comedic claims that the Marine Corps might have made money from the show due to Stallings’s status as a former Marine. The *Variety* reporter quipped that “they all smiled and let it go at that. The Commandant of the Marine Corps, General Lejeune, was the most interested, but he refused to be quoted, stating that he hadn’t made up his mind.”³⁵³ Lejeune was indeed interested. The Commandant of the Marine Corps took his wife to go see the play on February 1, 1925 while on vacation in New York City.³⁵⁴ *What Price Glory?* was released as a silent film in 1925, once again sparking debate over its vulgarity. In true comedic tone, the filmmakers left in much of the “pugnacious dialogue” but did not transcribe the actual words into the subtitles.³⁵⁵

³⁵¹ “Police Investigate Three B’Way Shows; “Glory” Heads List,” *Variety*, October 1, 1924.

³⁵² “Police Investigate Three B-Way Shows; “Glory” Heads List,” *Variety*, October 1, 1924.

³⁵³ “Capital Off “What Price Glory?,” *Variety*, October 1, 1924.

³⁵⁴ Letter, February 1, 1924, Folder 2, Container 8, Lejeune Papers, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

³⁵⁵ Jack Smith, “When lip reading between the lines had the subtitles beat by a long sight,” *Los Angeles Times*, July 20, 1987.

To highlight General Lejeune's appreciation for making sure the Corps' public image was in good hands, in September 1925, he issued an order to establish a Marine Corps "publicity officer." From a Headquarters Memorandum, Lejeune stated "Major Joseph C. Fegan (Room 3012) is the Marine Corps Publicity Officer at Headquarters. In order that he may exercise the functions of his office, it is necessary that matters deserving of publicity be brought to his notice." "We seek good publicity...It is requested that all...at headquarters Marine Corps bring to the attention of Major Fegan any matters which they consider would be of value to the Marine Corps if published."³⁵⁶

Perhaps based on the successes of the Corps' relationship with the entertainment industry during World War I, and at General Lejeune's request, the Marine Corps sought to develop a film with MGM in 1926. Lejeune "plunged [the Marine Corps] unreservedly into moving pictures," having signed a contract with MGM for "exclusive rights to make all feature pictures of the marines" for one year, specifically with the film *Tell it to the Marines*.³⁵⁷ This was news primarily because the other services had not signed such exclusive contracts with the private sector before. Lejeune was central to the development of this film having made contact with MGM after watching another war film, *The Big Parade*, which "brought him to the conclusion that a similar picture with members of the Marine Corps playing the stellar role would stimulate recruiting."³⁵⁸

Tell it to the Marines, starring *Phantom of the Opera*'s Lon Chaney was an unabashedly pro-Marine Corps film that legitimately captured audiences across the country. Released in late 1926, the silent film followed a "young tout from Kansas City"

³⁵⁶ "Headquarters Memorandum," as quoted in Lindsay, *This High Name*, 38-39.

³⁵⁷ "Gets Sole Rights to Film Marines," *New York Times*, February 2, 1926.

³⁵⁸ "Gets Sole Rights to Film Marines," *New York Times*, February 2, 1926.

named “Skeet” Burns, who enlisted in the Marine Corps to get a free train ride to some horse races in Tijuana (via San Diego). Upon arriving in San Diego, Skeet’s cover was blown and the tough-as-nails Marine Corps Drill Sergeant, Sergeant O’Hara gave him a lecture which convinced him to give the Corps a real try. The film, nearly 100 years old at the date of this writing, contains the same type of humor used in the Marine Corps to this day. Private Skeet is introduced to the demanding life of becoming Marine, all while suffering light hearted hazing along the way. Sergeant O’Hara enthusiastically poses a question to the squad, “Who wants to skip drill and drive the general’s car for day?” Private Skeet gladly accepts in order to escape the monotony of drills in the California heat, however, “the general’s car” is actually a wheelbarrow full of rocks to be hauled from one point to the next.³⁵⁹

Unlike *What Price Glory?*, *Tell it to the Marines* follows the Marine Corps’ activities around the world. Scenes are set at sea aboard American battleships, at rainy Marine Corps bases in the Philippines, and guarding the streets of Shanghai, China. In this sense, *Tell it to the Marines* appealed to the adventure-seeking recruits the Corps sought at this time. In the *Variety* film review, *Tell it to the Marines* was considered a “sure-fire box office if there ever was one.” “Many may say that it is out and out propaganda for the U.S.M.C....but the chances are that any fellow seeing what the hero of this yarn had to go through before he made the grade would lay off the Marine Corps if he is looking for a soft snap.”³⁶⁰ These are the qualities the Marine Corps under Lejeune consistently projected to the public and they are still foundational to the Corps’ recruiting

³⁵⁹ “Tell It to the Marines,” *Variety*, December 29, 1926.

³⁶⁰ “Tell It to the Marines,” *Variety*, December 29, 1926.

campaigns today. The idea that joining the Marines is no easy feat. It takes tough men to join the Corps, but when they do, they not only have an opportunity to see the world, but also to see action, and, perhaps more importantly to become part of the national network of former Marines.

Major General John A. Lejeune rose to the leadership of the Marine Corps with invaluable experience from the two military services the Corps sought to distinguish itself against. Lejeune started his military service at the Naval Academy at a time when Naval officers were questioning the viability of that service's manpower and mission. Lejeune attended the Army War College and served as an army division commander in the First World War. His experience with the other services helped to legitimize Lejeune, especially in Washington, D.C. circles. Lejeune served as commandant from 1920 to 1929, under three administrations, both Democrat and Republican. Lejeune's progressive reform of the Marine Corps, specifically as he introduced his three "E's," economy, efficiency, and education helped to streamline the Corps at the staff level and turned the Corps into a place where even enlisted men could get practical education for the future.

By the end of Lejeune's commandancy, the Marine Corps was a different institution in many respects. Lejeune sought to develop a new mission for the Marine Corps with the Marine Expeditionary Force and, while managing conflicts across the Caribbean, tried to focus the Corps' military training toward future conflicts, such as Pacific island hopping. Lejeune's interest in how the Corps was represented in popular culture also led to its public image being developed both on Broadway and in Hollywood, a relationship that would serve the Corps well in World War II. Despite the tight budgets of the 1920s and the effects of the Washington Conference on the Limitation of Arms,

which forced the navy to make millions of dollars of uncomfortable budget cuts across the service, Lejeune helped the Corps to appear continuously active and militarily effective. That there were no major unification debates in the 1920s was surprising, yet quite fortuitous for the Corps. The British Royal Marines, an organization to which Lejeune often compared the U.S. Marines in speeches to the public, failed to secure a similar mission in the British military, thus facing amalgamation into the other services.

The legacy of the Marine Corps Lejeune crafted in the 1920s lasted well into the 1930s, in large part due to the commandants who succeeded him. While Major General Wendell C. Neville replaced Lejeune after he stepped down, he only served for one year before his untimely death in 1930. In the commandants who took over after Neville, including Major Generals Ben H. Fuller, John H. Russell, Jr., and Thomas Holcomb was a representation of the class of officers who entered the Marines during the Corps' professionalization. Not only did their similar experience in education at the Naval Academy tie them to Lejeune, but Lejeune's progressive legacy and attention to the Corps' public relations lived on in these commandants.

In 1928, Lejeune designated then Brigadier General Ben Harbord Fuller as his assistant commandant and when Fuller was promoted to Major General and selected as commandant by President Herbert Hoover, he took the helm of a Marine Corps in a similar situation that Lejeune commanded at the outset of World War I. Fuller's Marine Corps was understrength, having only 18,000 of the Congressionally allotted 27,000 Marines.³⁶¹ Indeed, as the Depression continued to worsen, with no end in sight, the

³⁶¹ Merrill Bartlett, "Ben Hebard Fuller and the Genesis of the Modern United States Marine Corps, 1891-1934" *Journal of Military History*, Vol 69 (January 2005), 83.

Marine Corps came under attack from Washington and the military establishment as Congress and the Hoover Administration tightened the noose around the navy's budget. In 1931, the Corps was at the point where it could not even fill out the 18,000 it had earlier, then reaching a just over 16,500 officers and men.

By the early 1930s, American support for the type of interventionism for which the Corps initially received so much praise began to wane. Japanese expansion in the Pacific had not registered yet with American military planners and the Marine Corps, albeit positioned to take a leading role in a future Pacific War, languished in the Caribbean and elsewhere. The intervention in Nicaragua, begun in 1927, yielded negative press for the Corps, as newspapers focused more on casualties than the sensationalist items of the past. While the Marine Corps once had a national publicity system in which it could get ahead of the news, the publicity establishment had, by 1932, tightened along with the Corps' budget.

In 1933, Major General Commandant Fuller sought to reverse that course with the creation of a Public Relations section at Headquarters, commanded by Major Joseph C. Fegan, the Marine who Lejeune designated the "Marine Corps Publicity Officer."³⁶² The small size of the Corps' new public relations and publicity establishment, however, certainly hampered its efforts to get ahead of the news and get the Corps into the press in a positive light. According to Fuller's order, the strategy was similar if not the same as it had been both before, during, and after World War I. Fuller ordered that "a continuous supply of timely photographs and news items of general public information as well as those applying to individuals, the latter for home consumption, are essential to the

³⁶² Lindsay, *This High Name*, 45.

success of this Public Relations Sections, and to this end you are urged to encourage the collection of such information and photographs of all activities under your command.”³⁶³

Without a sensationalist press or the public excitement for news of a foreign war, however, the Corps failed to penetrate the news cycle as it had before.

Perhaps the American cultural shift toward isolationism and a focus on domestic issues had a more significant impact on the Corps during this period than previously believed. Whereas prior to the Depression, the Corps was often the darling of an interested press, it appears that even some prominent members of the press began to rally against the Marine Corps in the 1930s. In 1934, John Boettiger of the *Chicago Tribune* Press Service, even published an editorial in the *Chicago Tribune* with the headline “Consider Plan for Abolishing Marine Corps.”³⁶⁴ Boettiger argued that “the new policy of nonintervention enunciated by the President in a speech last month has eliminated the one essential excuse for the maintenance of a Marine Corps. The Corps has been used during past years to enter and occupy certain territories over which the United States has maintained a paternal surveillance and which got out of hand.”³⁶⁵

It is important to note that throughout this period, the Marine Corps, despite the perceived turn in public opinion, never abandoned the strategy of an open dialogue and relationship with the public through publicity. While the army and navy both had public relations and news sections with their services, they were often subordinate to those services’ intelligence and censorship commands. Whereas the army and navy’s public image institutions were reactionary and used mainly to control and censor the news and

³⁶³ Lindsay, *This High Name*, 45-46.

³⁶⁴ John Boettiger, “Consider Plan for Abolishing Marine Corps,” *Chicago Tribune*, January 24, 1934.

³⁶⁵ John Boettiger, “Consider Plan for Abolishing Marine Corps,” *Chicago Tribune*, January 24, 1934.

news correspondents, the Marine Corps continued to operate its public relations and publicity operations either by as a command by itself or directly under Headquarters Marine Corps so that it was allowed more freedom to interact with the public.³⁶⁶ This was an important legacy that the Marine Corps carried through to World War II.

Major General John H. Russell succeeded Fuller as commandant in March 1934, bringing yet another Naval Academy graduate of the 1880s and 90s to the helm of the Marine Corps. Russell's stint as commandant was a short one, though in terms of public relations, the Major General reiterated much of Lejeune and Fuller's guidance on public relations, even going as far to criticize officers who failed to deliver to the Public Relations Office the material needed for the Corps' publicity. In one memo, Russell encouraged commanding officers to "show more interest in the matter of public relations, as much valuable material for stories is being overlooked."³⁶⁷ Marine Corps publicity in during Fuller and Russell's eras, however, had to be much different than it was during the first two decades of the twentieth century. Far from the original tactics of Captain Harllee's Chicago Recruiting District in 1907 and the Publicity Bureau during the war, one recruiter during Russell's commandancy stated "In the preparation of publicity, every care should be used to eliminate even a trace of 'Ballyhoo' or war propaganda."³⁶⁸ Russell's policy on publicity as stated in a *Marine Corps Gazette* article in November 1934 offers insight into how the American public's views changed toward the old types of publicity. "There is a strict taboo on anything which savors of propaganda,

³⁶⁶ Lindsay, *This High Name*, 46.

³⁶⁷ *Headquarters Bulletin*, No. 117, June 15, 1935, as quoted in Lindsay, *This High Name*, 48.

³⁶⁸ Lindsay, *This High Name*, 47.

flamboyancy and that undesirable type of publicity which can best be described as “bunk.”³⁶⁹

While it may be argued that the Corps’ public image somewhat languished during the Depression, the legacy of Lejeune’s interest in the Corps as an advanced base force and rising tensions in the Pacific helped the Marine Corps survive the “post-small wars” era. In 1936, President Franklin Roosevelt selected Major General Thomas Holcomb to be Commandant of the Marine Corps, a move that designated one of Lejeune’s most significant protégés to lead the Corps. Unlike Neville, Fuller, and Russell before him, Holcomb was not a Naval Academy graduate or part of the Corps’ professionalization in the late nineteenth century. Instead, Holcomb’s pre-Marine Corps experience was as a clerk at a steel mill, a job which allowed him to witness the complex machinations of a large business, skills that he would eventually hone as a staff officer under Lejeune.³⁷⁰

Holcomb was a great fan of Lejeune and especially Lejeune’s progressive managerial style and organization. Holcomb biographer, David Ulbrich argues that “all Lejeune’s E’s (Economy, Efficiency, Education) in the 1920s clearly left lasting impressions that would have positive effects during Holcomb’s own commandancy.”³⁷¹ As Lejeune had, Holcomb “devoted many of the Corps’ limited resources to maintaining a positive public image.”³⁷² Ever the progressive manager, Holcomb created a new structure for the Corps’ public relations system that was aimed toward a reduction in editorial griping about the Marines in the press. In January of 1937, Holcomb “demanded

³⁶⁹ Anonymous, “Two Alices in Wonderland,” *Marine Corps Gazette*, November 1934.

³⁷⁰ David J. Ulbrich, *Preparing for Victory: Thomas Holcomb and the Making of the Modern Marine Corps, 1936-1943* (Annapolis: Naval Institute Press, 2011), 14.

³⁷¹ Ulbrich, *Preparing for Victory*, 28.

³⁷² Ulbrich, *Preparing for Victory*, 46.

that a stop be put to practices which resulted in publication of items not cleared or released through the Public Relations Section, or which resulted in disgruntled editors—the victims of “beats” by their opposition.”³⁷³

While Holcomb, like the other commandants who succeeded Lejeune, attempted to reinforce the Corps’ publicity efforts, by 1937, the Corps failed to attract even the minimum number of recruits needed to outpace those Marines leaving the service. The lack of inventiveness and adaptation, qualities that defined the early years of Marine publicity, and America’s isolationism, left the Corps dwindling, in both numbers and, some argue, in reputation. Also important to the Corps’ decline in recruiting during the Depression was the reduction in recruiting stations as a result of budget cuts. Historian David Ulbrich finds that “from 1930 to 1937, the total number of ‘main stations’ and ‘substations’ dwindled dramatically, from 103 to only 17, and recruitment personnel dipped from 26 officers and 303 enlisted to 15 officers and 70 enlisted Marines.”³⁷⁴ As evidenced with the Chicago Recruiting district’s “follow-up book,” and the Publicity Bureau’s hometown news focus in World War I, the Corps’ recruiting success often hinged on the hometowns of Marines, especially those well-covered by recruiters across the country.

In his book *Underdogs*, historian Aaron O’Connell opens with the argument that “before World War II, the United States Marine Corps was tiny, unpopular, and institutionally disadvantaged.”³⁷⁵ This is, of course, only part of the story. By the end of

³⁷³ Lindsay, *This High Name*, 48.

³⁷⁴ Ulbrich, *Preparing for Victory*, 49.

³⁷⁵ Aaron O’Connell, *Underdogs: The Making of the Modern Marine Corps* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2012), 1.

the Depression, the Marine Corps faced numerous obstacles that impeded their growth and reputation. The Corps' poor reputation at the start of World War II was only temporary. While funding prevented the Marines from executing a publicity strategy on the level they achieved from the Spanish-American War through the 1920s, the Corps' leadership entered the war era with nearly 40 years of experience with public relations and publicity. The army and navy's censorship-focused news and public relations bureaus represented an institutional knowledge of controlling the news, rather than exploiting it.

In the interwar period, it was General John A. Lejeune's legacy as seen in the leadership that succeeded his own, and his foresight both in terms of the Corps' military mission as well as its public image helped to keep the Corps from serious institutional damage prior to World War II. As the Japanese began to fortify bases in the Pacific, it became clear that an expeditionary Marine Corps was necessary to the military establishment. As the war began in Europe and rumors of war circled the United States, the Corps' public image as an elite fighting force once again attracted recruits, even after the downturn in the 1930s. By 1941, surveys completed by recruits who just completed their basic training at Marine Corps Recruit Depot San Diego overwhelmingly cited education, travel, and a sense of adventure as reasons for joining the Marine Corps, the same reasons the Marines sought to reinforce throughout the entire interwar period.³⁷⁶

³⁷⁶ Supplemental Folder, Box 1475, Entry 18A, Commandant's General Correspondence, RG 127 NARA II, College Park, MD.

CHAPTER IV – JOE BLOW ON THE HOMEFRONT: COMBAT CORRESPONDENTS AND THE MARINE CORPS' PUBLIC IMAGE IN THE SECOND WORLD WAR

As the U.S. entered World War II, the Marine Corps benefited from nearly four decades of institutional knowledge of public image management and publicity in order to quickly establish a successful public relations framework. In particular, the Marine Corps' use of media professionals during World War II and its focus on telling the stories of the average Marine to hometowns across the United States represents a prime example of why the Corps surged beyond its fellow services with the public perception of America's "elite" military force. The global nature of the Second World War and the Marine Corps' expanded role in a single theater made that war a defining moment for the future of the institution. Perhaps the most recognizable achievement of the Marines during World War II was the flag-raising during the Battle for Iwo Jima in February 1945. It was at this moment in the war that Secretary of the Navy James Forrestal observed, "the raising of that flag on Suribachi means a Marine Corps for the next 500 years."³⁷⁷ The flag-raising and Associated Press (AP) photographer Joe Rosenthal's image of Marines and a U.S. Navy Corpsman in that symbolic act became icons for both the Marine Corps and the Pacific War, yet the American public already knew the Marine Corps well.

Beginning in mid-1941, the director of the Corps' DPR, Brigadier General Robert L. Denig, created a war correspondent system using similar yet adapted tactics of the Corps' Publicity Bureau thirty years prior. These correspondents, professional journalists,

³⁷⁷ J. Robert Moskin, *The U.S. Marine Corps Story* (New York: Back Bay Books, 1977), 364.

photographers, artists, moviemen, and radiomen, were recruited from newspapers, magazines, and other media outlets around the country and became Marines through commission or enlistment and thus acted as Marine writer-fighters. The organization Denig created, known as Marine Corps Combat Correspondents (CC), played a vital role in further endearing the public to the Marine Corps, which allowed the significance of Rosenthal's photo in 1945 to penetrate deep into the hearts of Americans, solidifying the Corps' place in history.

The Corps' relationship with the American public, however, did not occur within the vacuum of World War II, but instead began nearly 40 years earlier. The Corps' close attention to public relations prior to World War II provides the institutional context for the Corps' strategies during the 1940s. Despite retired Marine Colonel James A. Donovan, Jr.'s argument that "the Marine Corps' public image is not the result of a well-organized public relations program," the U.S. Marine Corps had actively sought a positive public image since 1907, and possibly earlier.³⁷⁸ As a service subordinate to the U.S. Navy, the Marine Corps underwent dozens of attempts from different sources to disband and unify with the other services. Partly because of this, the U.S. Marine Corps has developed a considerable sense of self-identity, and in turn, recognition of the need for self-preservation. As retired Marine Lieutenant General Victor Krulak dramatically stated, "in the military establishment they were perennially the smallest kid on the block in a hostile neighborhood."³⁷⁹ This "under siege" mentality led the Marine Corps to

³⁷⁸ James A. Donovan, Jr., *The United States Marine Corps* (New York: Frederick A. Praeger Publishers, 1967), 184.

³⁷⁹ Victor H. Krulak, *First to Fight: An Inside View of the U.S. Marine Corps* (Annapolis: Naval Institute Press, 1984), 3.

actively seek the approval and understanding of the American public. As early as 1914, Marines such as Captain Thomas Sterrett appealed to recruiters across the country to build local relationships by establishing themselves in the community, creating relationships with prominent local individuals, and approaching the newspaper editors in that town.³⁸⁰ The focus on the Corps' relationship with the public continued in World War II and is best represented by the sign that hung above General Denig's office during the war, which read "If the public become apathetic about the Marine Corps, the Marine Corps will cease to exist."³⁸¹

In order to better understand the CC system as a case study for the Corps' employment of public relations, it is important to understand both the man who created the system as well as the origins and mission of the DPR and the CCs. Brigadier General Robert L. Denig was an Ohio native and, as of his first retirement in 1941, a nearly forty-year veteran of the Marine Corps. For some, Denig's name does not conjure images of war correspondents, but of his service as part of the Guardia Nacional in Nicaragua and of his wartime heroics during some of the Corps' engagements in World War I. By 1941, Denig had retired from the Marine Corps as a war hero. No longer than twenty-four hours after his retirement, however, the Commandant of the Marine Corps, Major General Thomas Holcomb, ordered Denig to his office and asked him what he knew about public relations. In Denig's own words, he replied, "I don't know anything about it. I've never heard of it before."³⁸²

³⁸⁰ "Working the Newspapers," *Recruiters' Bulletin*, November 1914, 10.

³⁸¹ Frank, *Denig's Demons*, 7.

³⁸² BGen. Robert L. Denig, interview by Benis Frank and Alvin M. Josephy Jr., Quantico, Virginia, May 24, 1967, 2-4, History Division Archives, U.S. Marine Corps.

Yet, despite his efforts at aloofness, Denig did have experience with the Corps' public relations activities. In 1912, less than a year after the creation of the Marine Corps Publicity Bureau, Denig, then a lieutenant in charge of a recruiting bureau in St. Paul, Minnesota, proposed some of his own recruitment material to the Publicity Bureau for publication in the Minnesota area.³⁸³ While his proposal was rejected, it clearly showed that Denig understood and recognized the need for recruiting material directed toward a specific location. While Denig may not have connected his pamphlet with professional public relations, he still had a special interest in Marine Corps recruiting. In 1913, he worked with the Assistant Surgeon General of the U.S. Navy on a study involving the improvement of mental standards for recruits of the U.S. Marine Corps.³⁸⁴ Denig's thirty years of experience with the Marine Corps and his curiosity for recruiting and publicity made him one of the best candidates for the position at the head of the DPR just before World War II.

During the last six months of 1941 and into 1942, Denig and the DPR sought out public relations professionals and newspapermen to staff the new department. In July of 1941, soon after Denig agreed to return to active duty, George Van der Hoeft and a professional from J. Walter Thompson accompanied him to the DPR.³⁸⁵ Van der Hoeft was a public relations and journalism expert in Washington, D.C. and Denig immediately gave him a commission in the Marine Corps as a major. According to Denig, it was soon

³⁸³ H.C. Snyder to Lt. Robert L. Denig, January 16, 1912, Publicity Folder, General Correspondence, Office of the Commandant, Records of the U.S. Marine Corps, 1904-1912, RG 127, National Archives and Records Administration, Washington, D.C. (NADC).

³⁸⁴ BGen. Robert L. Denig, interview by BGen. Robert L. Denig, Jr., Los Altos, California, September 5, 1977, 253, History Division Archives, U.S. Marine Corps.

³⁸⁵ Denig, interviewed by Frank and Josephy, May 24, 1967, 3.

after the attack on Pearl Harbor and America's declaration of war that he and Van der Hoeff made the decision to seek out journalists and newspapermen to join the Marine Corps.³⁸⁶

The primary catalyst for the recruitment of journalists into the Marine Corps, which was the foundation of the Combat Correspondent system, was what many prominent officers in the Marine Corps believed to be the "paucity of any real news coming from Wake Island." This lack of news, often referred to as the "silence at Wake," "opened the eyes of many of the senior staff officers, especially in the Division of Plans and Policies, to the need of having on-the-scene correspondents with Marines in the field."³⁸⁷

Americans waited in fear during the intense days following the attack on Pearl Harbor as the Japanese expanded their empire from Southeast Asia to the Philippines. At Wake Island, American defenders, including a forward-deployed Marine Corps Defense Battalion, put up a stiff defense. The understaffed unit sank or damaged nine Japanese naval vessels with coastal artillery weapons before they expended their ammunition and were finally overrun by the Japanese more than two weeks later.³⁸⁸ Throughout this episode, Americans on the mainland heard little of what was happening, with the exception of small communication blips that stated, "still holding out" and "send us more Japs!"³⁸⁹

³⁸⁶ Frank, *Denig's Demons*, 4-5.

³⁸⁷ Frank, *Denig's Demons*, 3-4.

³⁸⁸ Millett, *Semper Fidelis*, 356-357.

³⁸⁹ Lindsay, *This High Name*, 56.

The initial lack of news from Wake Island was both a matter of geography and censorship. In the first days after Pearl Harbor, the Roosevelt Administration sought to lighten the public's perception of the severity of the Japanese attacks on America's Pacific bases. The attack at Pearl Harbor, closest to the U.S. mainland, was immediately censored. "The news blackout was approved by the White House, which promptly appropriated the right to issue war bulletins from the Navy and War Departments."³⁹⁰ Due to military censorship of the news, the press had to get its news from the rumor mill in countries around the Pacific. The news, however, seemed bleak. On December 8, the *New York Times* ran a short release from *Reuters* in Shanghai, that "quoted an unconfirmed report circulated there saying that United States-owned Wake Island had been occupied by the Japanese."³⁹¹ For Denig and his newly created Division of Public Relations, the "silence" in the press of the Marine Corps' defense of Wake Island was unacceptable.

For the Marines, both in the Division of Public Relations and the Division of Plans and Policies, the "silence at Wake," of course, was less a matter of timely military news, but instead a lack of human interest news, especially about the Marines involved. The reality, understood by Marine Corps leaders, was that Wake Island was all but lost. With the American fleet paralyzed at Pearl Harbor, there was little to nothing U.S. armed forces could do to back up the Marines and sailors at Wake Island, especially against a significant Japanese force. However, the Corps' leaders know that Marines continued to play a significant role, even if that role was as defenders of the doomed island.

³⁹⁰ Gregory J.W. Urwin, *Facing Fearful Odds: The Siege of Wake Island* (Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 1997), 6.

³⁹¹ "Rumor Wake Island Seized," *New York Times*, December 8, 1941.

Fortunately for the Marine Corps, the “silence at Wake” was a short-lived period. Marines at the isolated atoll of Wake Island managed to issue short wireless communications to Hawaii that encouraged the public as to its defense and began to bring the Marines into the public focus. On December 10, a dispatch from Wake Island read, “SHELLED AT DAWN BY SURFACE VESSEL[S] X ONE LIGHT CRUISER AND ONE DESTROYER DEFINITELY SUNK BY SHORE BATTERIES...X FOURTH AIR RAID 2100...X TO DATE FIVE BOMBERS SHOT DOWN BY AA AND FIGHTERS X.”³⁹² Major General Commandant Thomas Holcomb saw this report as an opportunity, both to report some good news amidst the terrible defeats suffered by the U.S., as well as a way to show that his Marine Corps was putting up a tremendous fight. With the help of Holcomb, this report and others reached the newspapers and the response was a tremendous burst of news for the Marine Corps. Historian David J. Ulbrich found that “suddenly the Wake Marines dominated the news wires with their heroic actions.” “The nation’s confidence and resolved soared to renewed heights. Americans, who previously had not known that Wake Island existed, now anxiously awaited more reports from the island. Holcomb made use of that coverage to bolster national will to fight and, of course, to increase the Corps’ visibility.”³⁹³

As for the Wake Island defenders, the fate they suffered was a high price, even if their defense helped to stir the nation. The dispatches that emanated from Wake Island made it to the newspapers every day for nearly two weeks as the Marines, sailors, and civilians were subjected to aerial bombing and attacks while the Japanese prepared for

³⁹² Urwin, *Facing Fearful Odds*, 7.

³⁹³ David J. Ulbrich, *Preparing for Victory: Thomas Holcomb and the Making of the Modern Marine Corps, 1936-1943* (Annapolis, Naval Institute Press, 2011), 105.

the invasion of the island. On Christmas Day, 1941, the Marines surrendered the island as the Japanese came ashore. Americans learned about the fate of the plucky Marines on Christmas Eve.³⁹⁴ Historian Gregory J.W. Urwin argues that “considering all that Wake Island now represented to the people of the United States, its conquest should have sharply lowered national morale. Strangely, though, the home front reacted with cheerful defiance.” “If fewer than four hundred Marines could give the Japanese so much trouble, Americans told themselves, just imagine what this great country would do once it was fully mobilized and ready to fight.”³⁹⁵

In response to the Corps’ perceived “silence at Wake,” General Denig went directly to Commandant Holcomb and requested 100 men for correspondent duty in the Pacific.³⁹⁶ After a careful study of the Corps’ manpower predicament, Major General Holcomb decided Denig could have ten men for his Combat Correspondent system.³⁹⁷ Denig immediately dispatched his chief administrative officer, Sergeant Joe Shipman, to Washington, D.C. to recruit journalists for the CCs. Shipman went directly to the *Washington Post*, *Star*, and the *Times-Herald*. Shipman stated that he “prepared for the mission by putting on my blues, my decorations, probably took a few short ones, and then went to the city editors for permission to talk to their personnel—and got it in each case.”³⁹⁸ Shipman made sure to use the lure of actual combat reporting to draw in the eager journalists, and with a promise of immediate promotion to the rank of sergeant

³⁹⁴ Urwin, *Facing Fearful Odds*, 9.

³⁹⁵ Urwin, *Facing Fearful Odds*, 9.

³⁹⁶ Frank, *Denig’s Demons*, 4.

³⁹⁷ Frank, *Denig’s Demons*, 4; for more information on Major General Commandant Thomas Holcomb and the U.S. Marine Corps manpower crisis of World War II, see David J. Ulbrich, *Preparing for Victory*.

³⁹⁸ Frank, *Denig’s Demons*, 5.

upon graduation from boot camp, he returned to Denig with 20 of Washington's top newspapermen, 10 for duty, and 10 back-ups for use if any of the first ten failed to finish training.³⁹⁹

Denig's recruitment of journalists from the D.C. area was so thorough that it created a negative reaction from some within the D.C. newspaper community. Cissie Patterson, owner of the *Washington Times-Herald* wrote to President Roosevelt to complain about Denig's recruitment activities and succeeded in getting the president to personally scorn Commandant Holcomb and force Denig to find journalists from other cities.⁴⁰⁰ Denig, however, did not feel that he had participated in any wrongdoing, as he later stated, "I kept hearing that we were robbing the office force of these newspapers. Well I wasn't bothering anybody. He went over there and announced what he wanted. They came in."⁴⁰¹ The *Washington Post* sent a number of its own staff to the Marine Corps and even sought to publicize that fact. In an August 1942 article, "4 of Post Staff to be Combat Writers of U.S. Marine Corps," the editors of the *Post* seemed proud of their newsmen's contribution to the war effort and highlighted the idea that that combat correspondents were different from regular war correspondents because they would see action. "These 'fighting writers' will work with photographers on stories concerning the Marines in action."⁴⁰² From Washington, Denig spread the word about the possibility of more CC positions to Chicago, Philadelphia, and New York City, where the editors of

³⁹⁹ Denig, interviewed by Frank and Josephy, May 24, 1967, 17-19.

⁴⁰⁰ Robert Taglianetti, "Denig's Demons: Marine News Reporters, Artists, Radio Personalities and Photographers in World War II," *Leatherneck*, September 2007, 53.

⁴⁰¹ Denig, interviewed by Frank and Josephy, May 24, 1967, 17.

⁴⁰² "4 of Post Staff to be Combat Writers of the U.S. Marine Corps," *Washington Post*, August 15, 1942.

newspapers in those cities ordered some of their men to go and report from among the enlisted men of the Marine Corps.

While the very first few journalists who joined Denig received automatic commissions as officers (some ranked as high as Major), the other incoming CCs immediately went to boot camp at the Corps' two recruit training camps, Parris Island, South Carolina and Camp Pendleton, California. This was where the CCs contact and personal connections with enlisted Marines began. Many of the incoming journalists barely met the requirements for enlistment in the Marine Corps, yet they often credit their experience at boot camp with keeping them alive in the South Pacific.⁴⁰³

At the beginning of the process for turning the journalists into Marines, Denig and other staffers at the DPR also worried about how the enlisted men would receive them. Many of the reporters and cameramen were much older and far more educated than their counterparts at boot camp. Correspondent Samuel Stavisky found himself questioned by his drill instructor as to why he would go through boot camp when he could receive an officer commission due to his education. Stavisky responded, "all I want to do is become an infantryman and I turned down the offer of a commission."⁴⁰⁴ Despite the Corps' small size, Denig also worried that his small contingent of CCs would get lost in the system once they graduated from boot camp, perhaps to become destined for a logistics or desk position that would keep them far from the action.⁴⁰⁵

As the CCs finished boot camp and became sergeants in the Marine Corps, General Denig made it his personal mission to train and prepare the CCs for their

⁴⁰³ Denig, interviewed by Frank and Josephy, May 24, 1967, 32.

⁴⁰⁴ Frank, *Denig's Demons*, 7.

⁴⁰⁵ Frank, *Denig's Demons*, 7.

assignments overseas. In his own words, the mission of the CCs was “give most of your time and attention to the enlisted man and what he says, thinks, and does. Tell the human-interest side of the Marine Corps. If Pvt. Bill Jones of Cumberland Gap wins the boxing championship of his unit, tell the people of Cumberland Gap about it.”⁴⁰⁶ To prepare for their service in the Pacific, many CCs were sent to other locations around the world where Marines had units deployed. CCs often started out in Iceland, Brazil, Dutch Harbor, Alaska, and the United Kingdom.⁴⁰⁷ By November 1942, the Marine Corps already wielded nearly 60 combat correspondents.

The most important part of the CCs mission in the Pacific was to collect stories from the enlisted men of the Corps. The stories collected by CCs received the nickname Joe Blow stories because of their personal nature and their ability to get those stories to the hometowns of the men they interviewed. Just as the Publicity Bureau in World War I disseminated stories of human interest to local newspapers across the country, the Joe Blow stories brought the Marine Corps to the homes of many in the United States. In a war where much of the big-picture news was censored by the Office of War Information (OWI), Joe Blow stories informed the local public of what their sons experienced as well as how the war progressed. By 1943, the DPR simply had to notify local newspaper editors that they would provide CCs for stories of men from their town and “almost every local editor responded and soon the country was covered with Marine Corps Joe Blow stories.”⁴⁰⁸ Integral to getting these stories was the CCs status as a Marine and not a civilian correspondent. Marine CCs landed in and amongst the Marines at the various

⁴⁰⁶ Frank, *Denig's Demons*, 9.

⁴⁰⁷ Frank, *Denig's Demons*, 9.

⁴⁰⁸ Frank, *Denig's Demons*, 22.

battles throughout the war and also carried a rifle, which meant that these enlisted journalists and photographers conducted patrols with the Marines and in some cases also died alongside their fellow Marines.

The Joe Blow-story of World War II closely resembled the “human interest” stories that emerged from the Marine Publicity Bureau in World War I. General Denig and the Corps’ Department of Public Relations sought to distinguish the activities of Marines around the world in a way that highlighted the individual, not apart from the institution, but as a product of it. In many ways, the term “human interest” was used in the first part of the twentieth century as a way to separate that type of content from much of the other content the people confronted daily. Unlike the other military services, the public relations and publicity personnel of the Marine Corps sought to associate the Marine Corps not specifically with items of “military interest,” or “political interest,” or “technological interest,” but instead with content of “human interest.” In this strategy, the Marine Corps, a military institution that perhaps could not otherwise separate itself from the other larger and better funded services in all the other types of “interests,” succeeded at convincing the public that Marines were more interesting as humans. This is an important distinction and achievement, because if the Corps’ public image strategists could convince the public that Marines were more interesting, then it could also convince that public to pay more attention to the institution as a whole, and to convince the public to invest in an invented “character” of the Corps.

Small town newspapers across the country published stories of their own hometown Marines or even reprinted particularly interesting stories from other papers around the country. An example of a Joe Blow story appears in the *Cass City Chronicle*

of Cass City Michigan. In it, Marine CC Sergeant James Finan presents a short story about Robert Gracey, a 29-year old Cass City resident and enlisted Marine serving on Okinawa. In the story, Finan describes Gracey's brush with death as a Japanese bullet grazed his helmet, knocking him down into his foxhole. Finan even included a short bio on Gracey, including the names and ages of his wife and children as well as his civilian occupation as a truck driver.⁴⁰⁹

Many of the Joe Blow stories printed in small town newspapers reflect how those stories became synonymous with the enlisted soldier's experience of the war. In an article in the *Adams County Free Press* of Adams County, Iowa, Marine CC Technical Sergeant Jeremiah A. O'Leary's story about the heroic actions of a navy corpsman in aiding wounded Marines accompanied a letter written home from Mrs. R.B. Leander, a nurse serving in Guam whose parents were Adams County residents. Although the article's subjects were from St. Paul, Minnesota, their story offered a window on realities of war that were shared by many who served in the Pacific, from combat troops to nurses.⁴¹⁰

Due to their ready-for-print style, newspapers throughout the United States also used stories from CCs to inform their readers about the Marine Corps' actions in the Pacific. A Cedar Rapids, Iowa newspaper reprinted a story by Staff Sergeant James Hague that recounted the Corps' battle for control of Guam, while at the same time providing a human side to the war, as he wrote, "U.S. Marines fighting a desperate enemy cling to their sense of humor." In the article, Hague recounted the story of a "green" private first class newly attached to an artillery unit. With the heavy barrage of

⁴⁰⁹ Sgt. James Finan, *Cass City Chronicle*, July 27, 1945.

⁴¹⁰ Tech. Sgt. Jeremiah A. O'Leary, *Adams County Free Press*, September 14, 1944.

shells from the Japanese, the private asked an older Marine how he would know whether the shell was incoming or outgoing, to which the older Marine replied, “Keep your eye on me. If they’re coming, I’m going.”⁴¹¹ These stories from the frontlines presented to the American public a way of understanding the war from the Marine’s viewpoint, even showing the difference between replacements and the “old salts” with shared information.

While many historians have identified the Joe Blow stories as an important part of the CC program, many have failed to identify the continuity of community-level public relations practiced by the Marine Corps for nearly half a century. That the Marine Corps solicited attention at the national level is a fact shared by the other services, some with public relations sections that numbered in the many thousands. At its height, the Marine Corps’ public relations section consisted of just over 250 officers and Combat Correspondents. By comparison, the navy’s photographic section alone reached 5,000 photographers by 1944.⁴¹² Yet, the Marine Corps managed to receive the title of “a propaganda machine that is almost equal to Stalin’s” from President Truman after the war, despite the fact that the Corps was a fraction of the size of its sister services.⁴¹³ The Joe Blow stories and the Corps’ understanding of the need to maintain a positive relationship with the American public helped it to rise to near mythic status by the end of the war.

A number of other factors helped to streamline the process of censorship and transportation of the CCs completed work back to the United States after the CCs

⁴¹¹ Staff Sgt. James E. Hague, *Cedar Rapids Tribune*, October 5, 1944.

⁴¹² Mame Warren, “Focal Point of the Fleet: U.S. Navy Photographic Activities in World War II,” *Journal of Military History* (October 2005), 1049.

⁴¹³ Millett, *Semper Fidelis*, 496.

interviewed the Marines on the frontlines. Unlike nearly the entirety of the Marine Corps, Denig's CCs did not fall under the Corps' Table of Organization and thus, technically did not exist.⁴¹⁴ This became quite useful for the CCs as they used any and all means possible to get their stories back to the United States faster than those of the civilian correspondents. The benefit of being outside the system, however, also put the CCs in danger of being called to any kind of duty—from digging latrines to clerking for officers. Denig was apparently also not immune from his CCs "freewheeling" status. One of his former CCs, Alvin Josephy, while interviewing Denig for his oral history, mentioned that he "realized (Denig) got summoned to the commandant's office or some part of the Marine Corps and asked some pretty tough questions about this or that fellow in the field who had done something that had caused a problem."⁴¹⁵

Combat Correspondents in the Pacific managed to build an efficient logistical network through the use of legitimate as well as some not-so-legitimate means. Denig even found that "we beat them (other services) on getting stuff back." The CCs needed to make sure that the bureaucratic censorship practices of the larger services did not slow down their copy from reaching the United States. In some cases, CCs maintained an "outstanding" relationship with the navy so that their material reached the proper channels throughout the mainland. It also helped that the Marines took part in the first major commitment of offensive ground forces of the war, the invasion of Guadalcanal. As the American public starved for information on the war, families also began receiving news about their sons, husbands, and fathers. Historian Benis Frank also found that "as

⁴¹⁴ Frank, *Denig's Demons*, 22.

⁴¹⁵ Denig, interviewed by Frank and Josephy, May 24, 1967, 56.

soon as the men in the field began receiving hometown news clippings from their families, they and their officers realized that those wonder of wonders, those unknown quantities—the unit CCs—we doing something after all.”⁴¹⁶

The Corps’ small size and relatively small and unhindered bureaucracy created the precise environment needed for Denig’s CCs to thrive and become successful, but Marines also begged, borrowed, and stole whatever they could to expedite the process of getting their material to the U.S. quickly. Benis Frank described the CCs as “wheelers, dealers, scroungers, and operators.”⁴¹⁷ In many instances, CCs promoted good relationships with the key personnel who controlled their stories and material once it left their hands. In some instances, Marines went as far as to personally bring their material back to the states via military transport. The DPR, while effective, did not have the same infrastructure that the army and navy’s public relations offices maintained, and thus it was often necessary for them to use the equipment and facilities of the other services. In one case, Marines befriended an army officer in a Wire photo shop and ended up making their own material higher priority over the army content passing through the same office.⁴¹⁸

While much of the material left by Marine Combat Correspondents resides in their stories printed in American newspapers, there are a few CCs from whom we can get better insight into their wartime experience through both their stories and their lives at war. The first large group of combat correspondents graduated from boot camp in July 1942. In that group were experienced newspapermen such as former *Washington Post*

⁴¹⁶ Frank, *Denig’s Demons*, 16.

⁴¹⁷ Frank, *Denig’s Demons*, 45.

⁴¹⁸ Frank, *Denig’s Demons*, 33.

journalist Technical Sergeant Sam Stavisky and Staff Sergeant Richard J. “Dick” Murphy, as well as Staff Sergeant Jim Lucas, and Public Relations Officer (PRO), Lieutenant William P. McCahill. The stories they sent back to the U.S. from the war zone not only offer insight into the war’s progression itself but also into the ways in which the Marine Corps’ public image was crafted from the voices of the Marines who were fighting at the front.

The Corps’ first major offensive engagement was the Battle of Guadalcanal, waged from August 1942 to February 1943. At this early stage in the war, every move by U.S. forces in the South Pacific was a tremendous gamble as Japanese naval forces were superior to the fleet the Allies mustered. On August 7, 1942, the 1st Marine Division landed at Guadalcanal where Marine and Japanese forces vied for control of the strategic island in the Solomons chain. The tenuousness of the situation was highlighted by the naval battles that occurred offshore of Guadalcanal as the U.S. Navy was decimated by the Japanese in night battles, withdrawing from Guadalcanal and leaving the Marines to hold the island. The stories that emerged from Guadalcanal focused on the heroics of the Marines there, particularly Marine aviators, whose “Cactus Air Force” fought a desperate air battle with limited supplies and an airfield that was under constant attack. By February, 1943, American forces wrested the island from the Japanese, securing that critical geography and allowing Marine aviators and naval forces to operate from Guadalcanal’s airfields as they continued up the Solomon Islands in Operation Cartwheel.

Marine Combat Correspondent Sam Stavisky, a former *Washington Post* assistant city editor was sent to Guadalcanal to write Joe Blow stories for the Marines on the island

and their folks at home. When Stavisky arrived in Noumea, New Caledonia, a staging area for American troops prior to deployment, leadership on the island had a difficult time understanding his post. Upon arrival to headquarters on the island, an officer reportedly questioned him: “What the hell are the combat correspondents? we’re getting all sorts of directives about what to do with them, but no one told us they were coming. I read the *Washington Post*, I like the *Washington Post*, and now you are here.”⁴¹⁹ Stavisky’s reputation as a *Post* reporter preceded him. The CCs were often given vague orders by the Corps back in the U.S. In some situations, that allowed the Marine-reporters to operate freely within the combat environment, while at other times stymieing their progress to the battlefield.

Stavisky’s close relationship with the editors at the *Washington Post* allowed the newly minted combat correspondent to attain space in the paper, even for his long form stories. When Stavisky’s first story was sent back to the U.S., the *Post* dedicated a large column to it and included a picture of Stavisky in his uniform. His first story recounted the action of a Marine tank unit as it destroyed a Japanese machine gun nest on Guadalcanal. Stavisky, however, made sure this Joe Blow story was a little different from the rest. In his opening lines, Stavisky wrote, “Setting out to destroy three Japanese nests impeding infantry advances, a Marine tank company gave their commander, just out of a hospital, a rousing “homecoming” on Guadalcanal, blasting more than 12 emplacements with cannon and machine guns deep behind enemy lines.” The name and parents of the tank commander associated with this attack, however, were familiar to both the *Post* and the Marines. “Leading the mission of destruction was Maj. Robert L. Denig, Jr.,

⁴¹⁹ Frank, *Denig’s Demons*, 14.

U.S.M.C., 33, of Sandusky, Ohio.” “Major Denig is a son of Brig Gen. Robert L. Denig, U.S.M.C. His wife, Mrs. Mary Drake Denig and a 3-year-old son, Robert L. 3d, live at 4003 Monument Avenue, Richmond, Va.”⁴²⁰ General Denig’s son was a Naval Academy graduate, and by all accounts, a talented Marine officer. It is unclear as to whether Denig himself appreciated the news and mention in this story.

Sergeant Stavisky sought to separate himself and his stories from the other correspondence reaching the United States from Guadalcanal. In January 1943, Stavisky volunteered to ride along in the gunner seat of a Marine SBD Douglas Dauntless dive bomber on a mission over Guadalcanal. While most of the Japanese resistance had been neutralized by this time in January, it was perhaps not an enormous risk, but his story no doubt garnered attention in American papers. In Washington, D.C., the *Post* gladly took credit for their former reporter’s actions and published Stavisky’s story. Stavisky immediately drew the audience into his experience, as he escorted the readers through the bombing run. “For a split second, the Dauntless Douglas poised, as if she were a giant eagle eyeing her prey. Then, with screeching hate, she hurled herself earthward—down—down—down—with terrifying speed.”⁴²¹ Stavisky was particularly talented at opening his stories as if they were adventure novels. With this style, his stories had an impact both with the hometowns and families of the Marines he interviewed as well as the type of recruits the Corps wanted.

Stavisky survived the war and, like many other combat correspondents, returned to the business of writing news for the public. Stavisky returned to the staff of the

⁴²⁰ Sergeant Samuel E. Stavisky, “12 Jap Nests Wiped Out by Marine Unit,” *Washington Post*, February 15, 1943.

⁴²¹ “D.C. Marine Reporter Handles Tail Gun in Bombing Mission,” *Washington Post*, February 25, 1943.

Washington Post after the war and used his experience as both fighting Marine and newsman in order to cover “the adjustment problems of veterans” who returned to the workforce. Stavisky went on to start a public relations firm in the 1950s, the crowning achievement of which was playing a “key role in getting congressional support for an international coffee agreement, which for more than 25 years stabilized the price of coffee coming from Latin America and Africa.”⁴²² Stavisky lived to the age of 93 and died on September 21, 2007.

William P. McCahill was a Midwesterner by all measures. Born in Iowa in 1916, he also lived in Minnesota, Indiana, Ohio, and Wisconsin. McCahill was a graduate of Marquette University’s College of Journalism and had experience in newspaper writing and editing with the A.P. Bureau in Milwaukee, Wisconsin. In March 1941, McCahill joined the U.S. Marine Corps and was commissioned a Second Lieutenant by May of that year. By 1942, McCahill earned a promotion to First Lieutenant and was brought in by General Denig to become part of the Marine Corps’ Division of Public Relations as a Public Relations Officer (PRO).⁴²³

Lieutenant McCahill’s experience as a PRO in World War II took him to many of the Corps’ battles, large and small. McCahill witnessed the loss of friends and other CCs and continued to write prolifically for the Marine Corps back home. His close relationship with General Denig and status as an officer also allows insight into the relationship between the Corps’ CCs and the top ranks of the DPR. Lieutenant McCahill

⁴²² Patricia Sullivan, “Samuel Stavisky; Newsman, Combat Correspondent,” *Washington Post*, September 24, 2007.

⁴²³ “William P. McCahill, First Lieutenant, U.S. Marine Corps,” Biographical File for McCahill, William P., Col. USMCR (Ret), U.S. Marine Corps History Division, Quantico, VA.

was deployed to the Pacific with the 4th Marine Division. As a PRO, McCahill had to create the division's public relations rules and doctrine from scratch, including the standard operating procedures to be followed by the CCs in the field.⁴²⁴ McCahill set down a controversial directive in which, when authorized, stories written by the Marine CCs could be "distributed to civilian correspondents on the spot." Historian Benis Frank argues that this policy was not well liked by the Corps' CCs because "PROs would sometimes have a CC turn a story over to a civilian correspondent because the latter was either lazy, incompetent, had bad luck, or was filing a yarn that would not do the Marine Corps any particular good, especially if ready out of context."⁴²⁵

McCahill was one of the first members of the Division of Public Relations to write General Denig about the details of his son, Captain James Denig's death on Namur in 1944. Captain Jimmy Denig was a Marine tank commander and was considered one of the most popular Marines in the division. McCahill's letter to Denig read just like a Joe Blow story only with a tragic ending. "Jimmy died like a true Marine facing the enemy in the very forefront of our advanced lines. His tank was leading the way into the last stronghold of the enemy...Six japs jumped out of the brush, climbing around and onto the tank. One of them dropped a grenade through the signal port." "Three of the men got out of the tank, Jimmy, Corporal William D. Taylor and... Corporal Dan T. Smith. Jimmy died of shrapnel wounds and burns about 15 minutes later in the arms of Corporal Taylor."⁴²⁶

⁴²⁴ Frank, *Denig's Demons*, 18.

⁴²⁵ Frank, *Denig's Demons*, 19.

⁴²⁶ Letter from William McCahill to Robert L. Denig, undated. William McCahill Personal Papers, U.S. Marine Corps Archives, Quantico, VA.

In order to communicate the directions of the DPR with CCs deployed worldwide, Denig had his section produce a newsletter called *Memorandum for all Combat Correspondents* that would keep the CCs up-to-date with each other and give the Marine-journalists feedback about the work they sent back to the United States. The first issue of *Memorandum* released in September 1942, reported that “the first real stories from CCs in the field scored smash hits all around” and that the *Washington Star*, *New York Times*, and *Herald-Tribune* all placed a story from CCs on Guadalcanal on page one of their papers.⁴²⁷ The *Memorandum* also disseminated information about what the Corps and the public needed in terms of photographs and stories. Another statement in the first issue noted that “Headquarters is very short of pix (sic) of individual officers, and they are needed.”⁴²⁸

While the *Memorandum* fulfilled practical needs for both the DPR and the CCs in the field, it also mimicked the practices of the DPR’s predecessor, the Publicity Bureau’s own monthly pamphlet, the *Recruiters’ Bulletin*. Started in 1914, the *Recruiters’ Bulletin* was managed by former newspapermen for the purpose of informing recruiters across the country on how to properly build relationships with local communities and newspapers. In the first issue, Captain Thomas G. Sterrett, a former newspaperman, published an article titled “Working the Newspapers,” in which he gave advice on both approaching newspaper editors, and perhaps more importantly, writing small newsworthy articles for publication in the papers.⁴²⁹ These stories are reflective of the stories in *Memorandum*

⁴²⁷ Headquarters: Marine Corps, *Memorandum to all Combat Correspondents*, September 1942, USMC History Division, Subject File: Combat Correspondents, 1.

⁴²⁸ Headquarters: Marine Corps, *Memorandum to all Combat Correspondents*, September 1942, USMC History Division, Subject File: Combat Correspondents, 1.

⁴²⁹ Thomas G. Sterrett, “Working the Newspapers,” *Recruiters’ Bulletin*, November 1914, 10.

nearly 30 years later. While the CCs had experience in writing copy for print, the DPR used *Memorandum* to guide the CCs toward the stories Denig felt the American public needed.

The organization of the Marine Corps and especially its recruiting stations situated throughout the United States also played a major role in facilitating the CCs work of keeping local towns aware of their hometown Marines' actions. Denig realized, just as Sterrett had in World War I, that the Corps' ability to reach as many towns throughout the United States as possible would make sure to keep the Corps' name in minds of the American public. During World War I, the Publicity Bureau had massive lists of newspapers and editors across the country and Marine recruiters developed relationships with local postmasters in order to disseminate pamphlets and news articles. Denig also found a way of making sure the DPR's influence was as local as it was national through the use of "a book that gives you all the small newspapers in the country...high school magazines, everything."⁴³⁰ While Denig clearly underscores the arrival of this "book" in his own oral history, it was clearly one of the most important tools at the DPR's disposal for the CCs to make sure their stories made it to each Marine's hometown.

Another way in which the DPR managed to reach Marine hometowns was through a system of surveys and personal information filled out when a Marine finished recruit training at the Marine Corps Recruit Depots. At San Diego in 1941, the Corps queried all of the graduating Marines about a number of aspects of their lives, which gave the editors back at the DPR the ability to add information about a Marine perhaps not

⁴³⁰ Denig, interviewed by Frank and Josephy, May 24, 1967, 40.

collected by the CC in the field. The questions in the surveys offer insight both into the Corps' interests in why their Marines joined, as well as the backgrounds of a social cross section of the Americans who joined the Marines and completed Marine training.

The purpose of the surveys for the Corps was clearly stated at the top of the form: "This information for use in home town paper, please give correct details." The top part of the survey asked for the Marine's name, address, birth, and other personal information. Further down the form, however, the survey began to delve into the Marines' interests. The qualitative information contained in the surveys included education, hobbies, and even "ambition in the Marines."⁴³¹ At the end of the fillable form, there was a more subjective question posed to the Marines, with room to type the answer on the back of the form. It stated, "On reverse side of paper, give reason why you enlisted in the United States Marine Corps, and what your impression of the Corps is, and also what branch of the service you are most interest in and why. Activities before enlisting, family prominence (political or social) Type of work you have been doing – and any other information that will be of interest, whether of a military or civil character."⁴³²

The information requested in these surveys was essential to the DPR, especially as it disseminated the Joe Blow stories to hometowns across the U.S. While only a few of these surveys and the Marines' answers still exist, they represent an important connection between the Corps and the public. In a survey completed by Taylor Clark West of Coolidge, Arizona, a graduate of Platoon 102 from Marine Corps Recruit Depot, San Diego, the Marine stated that his "ambition in the Marine Corps is to become a clerk in

⁴³¹ Supplemental Folders, General Correspondence, "Questions for Interview," RG 127, NACP.

⁴³² Supplemental Folders, General Correspondence, "Questions for Interview," RG 127, NACP.

the Air Corps and to take flight training, if possible.” West stated that he “joined the Marines to get a better education than...[he] possesses. West also wrote, “I like the Marines very much because it builds a fellow up in more ways than one.” When it came to his family, West was not shy in declaring that his “family is one of the best-known families in Coolidge Ari., and my father has many friends in this town, and few if no enemies.”⁴³³

The surveys also reflect that the core tenets of Marine recruiting and publicity in the 1920s and 1930s, themes of travel and adventure, continued to influence recruits even on the cusp of the Second World War. In nearly half of the 44 surveys available, the newly graduated Marines mention either term in the sections “ambition in the Marines” and “Why Enlist in the Marines.”⁴³⁴ Education was also a frequent answer in the same sections. Howard Herbert Lucas of Yakima, Washington listed his ambition in the Marines as “to get an education in Architectural Engineering and save money to go to college.” He enlisted in the Marines “for an education and to get money to go to school when I get out. My impression is that the Marines is a highly respected organization. I am of the impression that I will get my education in architecture and an education in health and discipline.”⁴³⁵ Many Marines enlisted in the Marine Corps, especially during and shortly after the Depression, in order to learn a trade that they could translate to a job outside of the service. Four of the Marines surveyed listed aviation mechanic as their ambition in the Marines, this may be because it was a much rarer trade than automobile mechanic, and thus offered them a better chance at a job in a smaller field.

⁴³³ Ibid, Taylor Clark West.

⁴³⁴ Supplemental Folders, General Correspondence, “Questions for Interview,” RG 127, NACP.

⁴³⁵ Ibid, “Howard Herbert Lucas.”

The Marines in the San Diego Recruit Depot surveys largely went on to serve with the 2d Marine Division in World War II. Eight of the Marines surveyed were wounded or killed during the war at some of the 2d Marine Division's most difficult battles, including the Solomon Islands campaign, Tarawa, and Saipan. Tarawa accounted for three of the eight casualties, with one killed and two others wounded in the battle. Private First Class Royal L. Waltz from Cambria, California was killed on November 21, 1943 at Tarawa and is still Missing in Action. Waltz's ambition in the Marines was "to make the best of my four years in the Marine Corps and to serve my country, the United States of America."⁴³⁶ Unfortunately, PFC Waltz's Joe Blow story was one that Marine families never wanted to see. In the *Fresno Bee - The Republican* on December 10, 1944, it was revealed that PFC Waltz was Killed in Action at Tarawa. The commanding officer of Waltz's platoon wrote to the parents that "We couldn't find out much. Your son was wounded on November 20, 1943. According to members of the platoon he received immediate first aid and remained in the shelter of a sea wall when the group moved forward. He wasn't seen or heard after that time by any of his outfit."⁴³⁷

While many tragic stories emerged from the Corps' invasion of Tarawa, there were Marine Combat Correspondents in the field with Marines to tell the stories of heroism and courage-under-fire that emerged from the conflict. In the November 20, 1943 issue of the *Memorandum for Combat Correspondents*, which touted the 1,681 stories released by the Division of Public Relations in October, Master Technical

⁴³⁶ Ibid, "Royal L. Waltz."

⁴³⁷ "Lemoore Marine Is Listed As Killed in Action," *The Fresno Bee - The Republican*, December 10, 1944.

Sergeant Jim Lucas was highlighted as the “most prolific writer in the field.”⁴³⁸ Six thousand miles away on the very same day, Lucas was with the 2d Marine Division as it approached the island of Tarawa. If Lucas had already gained notoriety within the Division of Public Relations, his actions and stories from the Tarawa battle would gain him international renown.

Prior to joining the Marine Corps as a Combat Correspondent, Lucas was a writer for some of his hometown papers, including the *Muskogee* (Oklahoma) *Daily Phoenix and Times-Herald*, as well as the *Tulsa Daily Tribune*. As a Combat Correspondent, Lucas quickly became a legend to the other CCs in the field. Fellow correspondents considered Lucas a “human writing machine.”⁴³⁹ Lucas reported the stories of the Marine Raiders in the Solomon Islands in early 1943 and continued to establish himself across the Pacific.

On November 21, Lucas joined the 2d Marine Division on Tarawa. Lucas’s stories from Tarawa were some of the first to make it back to the United States. In the *Memorandum for all Combat Correspondents*, the DPR wrote that “Master Technical Sergeant Jim Lucas became a national figure overnight. His personal narrative story of the action was featured on page one of practically every major newspaper in the country and was given the streamer line by many of them, including Chicago, New York, and Washington papers.”⁴⁴⁰ The *Chicago Tribune* ran the headline “HOW U.S. WON

⁴³⁸ “October Total,” *Memorandum for all Combat Correspondents*, November 20, 1943. USMC History Division, Subject File: Combat Correspondents.

⁴³⁹ “Biography of Second Lieutenant Jim G. Lucas,” USMC History Division. Biographical File: Jim G. Lucas.

⁴⁴⁰ “Tarawa,” *Memorandum for Combat Correspondents*, December 11, 1943. USMC History Division, Subject File: Combat Correspondents.

TARAWA! STORY BY A MARINE,” on the front page of its December 4, 1943 issue. The story took up nearly six columns of space, which was a tremendous amount, especially for a story by a Marine CC. It shows, however, that the public was anxious for news from the Pacific front, especially this early in the war.

Lucas’s own hometown newspaper, *The Sun*, of Tulsa, Oklahoma published an editorial about Lucas’s writing style and his story that compared him favorably with past war correspondents, including Stephen Crane and Leo Tolstoy. “Here is the full story of one man’s experiences in what will rank as one of the great engagements of the United States Marines. The account consists almost wholly of brief declarative sentences. Those sentences tell of the approach from the sea, the landing under fire, the fearful night when the battle hung in the balance, the slow ascendancy of the Marines, the last dreadful flushing by fire-throwers of the pillboxes whence Japanese had rained death for hours on young Americans.”⁴⁴¹ The DPR latched onto the praise of Lucas’s story as a way to educate the other CCs in the field in order to help them emulate Lucas’s writing. The DPR underlined the sentence about “brief declarative sentences,” and stated that it “delineates one quality which all good news writing has.”⁴⁴² They go on shed light into the writing strategy, the DPR hoped all CCs learned: “He doesn’t stop to throw in a “glorious,” “illustrious,” “peerless,” “indomitable” etc...every time he mentions the Marine Corps; he realized that if his story alone does not tell the readers how good the

⁴⁴¹ Editorial in *The Sun* as quoted in “Tarawa,” Memorandum for Combat Correspondents, December 11, 1943. USMC History Division, Subject File: Combat Correspondents.

⁴⁴² “Tarawa,” Memorandum for Combat Correspondents, December 11, 1943. USMC History Division, Subject File: Combat Correspondents.

Marines are, no amount of 14-carat adjectives will help.”⁴⁴³ Lucas eventually attended Officer Candidates School and was promoted from an enlisted man to a second lieutenant. After the war, Lucas became a staff writer for Scripps-Howard and covered the Vietnam War as a civilian.

The Joe Blow stories created by the Marine Combat Correspondents not only made it to the newspapers, but also to the families of the Marines they depicted. Armed with the addresses of Marines across the country, the Department of Public Relations also sent original copies of the stories as well as the photographs taken by the CCs in the field. This proved incredibly effective at endearing the Marines’ families to the Corps. In the December 28, 1943 issue of the *Memorandum for all Combat Correspondents*, the DPR reported that the “Central Procurement Division has received hundreds of expressions of gratitude from families of whom the division has sent copies of pictures and stories having to do with men of the families in the Corps.”⁴⁴⁴ In examples of the praise received from the families, the DPR quoted one letter, “It is with great pleasure and appreciation that we acknowledge receipt of your letter with the story about Bob, and the photograph. Courtesies like this are helpful in these troubled times and make us doubly proud of the service in which he has enlisted and is serving.”⁴⁴⁵ The thankfulness expressed by the families of Marines in the field also made it back to those Marines serving overseas, who saw how happy it made their families to get such news from the front. Marine CC First

⁴⁴³ “Tarawa,” *Memorandum for Combat Correspondents*, December 11, 1943. USMC History Division, Subject File: Combat Correspondents.

⁴⁴⁴ “Families Appreciate Pics and Stories,” *Memorandum for Combat Correspondents*, December 28, 1943. USMC History Division, Subject File: Combat Correspondents.

⁴⁴⁵ “Families Appreciate Pics and Stories,” *Memorandum for Combat Correspondents*, December 28, 1943. USMC History Division, Subject File: Combat Correspondents.

Lieutenant Millard Kaufman wrote back to the DPR: “The excellent headquarters policy of mailing the original story on a Marine to his parents has come to the attention of this unit. An enthusiastic letter from Fern E. Doins of Peoria, Ill., to her son, about whom I wrote a story, mirrored her appreciation for the copy she received. Her son showed me the letter and was as happy about the gesture as his mother.”⁴⁴⁶

Newspaper reporters were not the only members of the Combat Correspondents system, as photographers, combat artists, and radiomen also played a major role in bringing news of the Marine Corps back to the United States. Early on in the war, the Marine Corps took advantage of an opportunity that the other services refused participation. The Music Division of the Library of Congress began a project designed to record the songs of the enlisted men in combat overseas, and Denig agreed to aid them in collecting these recordings. Denig, however, admitted to dual purposes, as he told one of his CCs to record the songs, but also any other combat material, including the sounds of bombing and interviews with the men. With the “Presto” recording machine, the trained radioman CC recorded bombing runs in the Pacific as well as the noise that accompanied amphibious landings, and his recordings were disseminated on radio stations throughout the United States. He also recorded the voices and stories of many Marines and had them delivered to local radio stations, expanding the Corps’ tools for reaching Marines’ hometowns through different mediums.⁴⁴⁷

Marine Corps Sergeant Dick Murphy, 24, from Chevy Chase, Maryland, was a graduate of Georgetown University and had experience writing with the *Washington Star*

⁴⁴⁶ “Families Appreciate Pics and Stories,” *Memorandum for Combat Correspondents*, December 28, 1943. USMC History Division, Subject File: Combat Correspondents.

⁴⁴⁷ Frank, *Denig’s Demons*, 17.

and worked his way up from “copy boy” to reporter for the *Washington Post* before enlisting in the Marine Corps in 1942.⁴⁴⁸ Murphy had his first assignment at the Canal Zone in Panama, part of Denig’s plan to prepare the correspondents for deployment. In his first credited story back to the U.S., Murphy wrote about the ways in which the troops kept busy in the canal zone. “You’ve probably wondered (I know I did) what service men at an overseas post do with their spare time,” Murphy wrote. “Reading, of course, leads the list.”⁴⁴⁹ While this piece is not exactly a rousing story with the core tenets of Denig’s individual “human interest” involved, it found its way into the local papers back at home and became good practice for Murphy’s stories to come. By January 1943, Sergeant Murphy found ways to create interesting news from the Canal Zone. The first line of his January 15 article, published in *The Tampa Tribune* stated “Now I know how it feels to be a torpedo.” While in Panama, Murphy managed to get a ride aboard a U.S. Navy sub and was there to experience a maneuver called the “battle surface,” which made for fascinating reading back in the U.S.⁴⁵⁰ Murphy’s submarine article was reprinted in seven American newspapers.

Once Murphy deployed to the Pacific in mid-1943 with the 2d Marine Division, he began sending home “Joe Blow” stories to reach the local newspapers. In September 1943, Murphy penned an article titled “Marine in Pacific Meets His Recruiting Noncom; Now Outranks Recruiter,” in which he tells the story of local Terre Haute Marine Sgt. Carl L. Bopp, who ran into one of his local Indiana recruiters who had been “reduced

⁴⁴⁸ “4 of Post Staff to be Combat Writers of the U.S. Marine Corps,” *Washington Post*, August 15, 1942.

⁴⁴⁹ Sgt. Richard J. Murphy, Jr., “Marines in Canal Zone Read Everything They Can Find as Their Chief Diversion,” *The News-Chronicle* (Shippensburg, PA), December 15, 1942.

⁴⁵⁰ Sgt. Richard J. Murphy, Jr., “Marine Finds Himself Fired Like Torpedo Through Sub Hatch,” *The Tampa Tribune*, January 15, 1943.

without prejudice” from Staff Sergeant down to Corporal in order to deploy to combat. The story not only mentioned Sgt. Bopp and his recruiter, but also worked in the information that Bopp was the “son of Dr. and Mrs. H.W. Bopp of Terre Haute,” and even mentioned that when the two Marines met each other, the recruiter immediately called out “Dr. Bopp’s son!”⁴⁵¹ This type of article with so much information relevant to local families represented how Joe Blow stories were so successful. Much like an engagement announcement in the paper, this story could easily be clipped and hung on the fridge at home for all to see. It could be a source of pride for the family and brought the Corps’ image to a local level.

The types of stories written by Sgt. Murphy and other CCs also helped to deliver vital details about a local Marine’s injuries, often times providing more information than the brief War Department telegrams. *The Edwardsville Intelligencer* ran an article by Sgt. Murphy regarding one of their local Marines and his commendation for “conspicuous gallantry” at Tarawa. Murphy wrote “Marine Private First Class Glenn S. Shaffer, son of Mr. and Mrs. Guy Shaffer, RR. 4, Edwardsville, Ill., was recently complimented by his commander for...keeping open lines of communication on Tarawa.” “A member of a wire team, Pfc. Shaffer not only helped to establish the only wire communication between forward assault companies and his battalion, but also ‘risked his life many times by keeping that line in repair during the attack on Tarawa Atoll, November 21.’ Private First Class Shaffer, a former filling station attendant, didn’t have much comment to make on his own action.”⁴⁵² This Joe Blow story not only offers the family of PFC Shaffer more

⁴⁵¹ Sgt. Richard J. Murphy, Jr., “Marine in Pacific Meets His Recruiting Noncom; Now Outranks Recruiter,” *The Indianapolis Star*, September 26, 1943.

⁴⁵² Sgt. Richard J. Murphy, “Local Youth Is Given Citation,” *Edwardsville Intelligencer*, February 2, 1944.

information about his injuries, but also it was an opportunity to brag about their son's actions overseas. The story also continued to reinforce the Corps' image as a battle-hardened service.

Sgt. Murphy and other Marine CC's stories also helped to directly associate the perceived successes of the Corps in the Pacific with towns across America. The tremendous effort on the home front in every city and town meant that recognition of each contribution to the war had meaning. In a story called "Mason City Marine Leads Final Mop-up On Tarawa Atoll," Sgt. Murphy, who also landed with the Marines at Tarawa, led with the statement "It was a sergeant from Iowa who led the Marine unit which cleared Tarawa of its last Japs. He was Platoon Sgt. William C. Cross of Mason City. The non-commissioned officer the day after Betio Island was secured."⁴⁵³ With this article picked up in Council Bluffs, Iowa, one of the largest cities in Iowa at the time, the people of Mason City as well as the friends and family of Sergeant William Cross received recognition for his and their part in the war effort at the front, all with the Marine Corps' public image at center stage.

The Corps' combat correspondents in the Pacific were both Marines and journalists and as such, they fought alongside fellow Marines, soldiers, and sailors at the front. On June 15, 1944, Sgt. Murphy boarded a Marine landing vehicle in order to join the first waves of Marines landing on the island of Saipan. After months of interviewing Marines for their stories of heroism and everyday occurrences on islands all over the Pacific, Murphy was slated to be with the infantry when it hit the beaches on that day.

⁴⁵³ Sgt. Richard J. Murphy, "Mason City Marine Leads Final Mop-up On Tarawa Atoll," *Council Bluffs Nonpareil*, March 8, 1944.

Unlike Tarawa and some of the other Marine amphibious invasions in the Pacific to that date, however, Saipan's mountainous terrain offered the Japanese an ideal vantage point to fire down on the incoming landing craft. While the details of what happened to Sgt. Murphy's LVT (landing vehicle, tracked) are unclear, the account passed down through his family reveals that another Marine was possibly ejected over the side. It is believed that Sgt. Murphy jumped over the side of the LVT in an attempt to save the other Marine's life. Neither Marine was seen alive again.⁴⁵⁴

What separated the Joe Blow stories written by Sgt. Murphy and the dozens of Marine Combat Correspondents was their focus on the individual Marine at war for the purpose of informing their friends and family at home in a way that shed a positive light on the Marine Corps, in spite of the deadly war that raged from the islands where those stories were written. Famous and talented war correspondents like Ernie Pyle wrote powerful and moving stories about individual soldiers, sailors, and Marines, yet his stories used the individual in order to tell a story with a much broader context. Consider the story of Captain Henry T. Waskow, who was killed at San Pietro on January 10, 1944 in Italy. Pyle's prose read more like a poem than a news item. The focus was death and the tragedy of war. "Never have I crossed the trail of any man as beloved as Capt. Henry T. Waskow of Belton, Texas," Pyle wrote. "I was at the foot of the mule trail the night they brought Capt. Waskow's body down. The moon was nearly full at the time, and you could see far up the trail, and even part way across the valley below. Soldiers made

⁴⁵⁴ Kristin Davis, "Remains of Marine Lost Off Saipan ID'd After 70 Years," *The Free Lance Star*, May 26, 2015. While the article cited here claims that Sgt. Murphy's remains were found and identified, this claim stems from an independent review of historical documentation. On July 25, 2018, the Defense POW/MIA Accounting Agency officially accounted for Staff Sergeant Richard J. Murphy, Jr. It turned out that his remains had been recovered after the battle, but officials were unable to identify him at the time.

shadow in the moonlight as they walked.”⁴⁵⁵ His story is devastating, just as war was devastating. When Pyle joined the Marines at Okinawa in 1945, he penned some of his darkest stories in the war, just before he, like Sgt. Murphy, was killed in action.

The year 1945 was pivotal for both the Marine Corps’ public image and for the war itself. By early 1945, the DPR had 63 public relations officers and 174 CCs in the Pacific. With operations in numerous island chains coming to a close, CCs flooded the DPR with Joe Blow stories and kept the Marine Corps in the minds of the public as the war in Europe also became the subject matter for the front pages of newspapers and magazines.⁴⁵⁶ The invasion of Iwo Jima in February 1945, however, marked one of the largest amphibious landing operations in history, and it was a Marine Corps operation that resulted in one of the most iconic images of the war, thanks to the work of CCs.

Iwo Jima nearly became one of the biggest disasters for the Corps’ image in its history. The Battle for Iwo Jima was the only battle in the war in which the United States suffered the nearly the same number of casualties as the Japanese. The horrific results of the landing on Iwo became the subject of insults back in the United States. According to Historian Benis Frank, “certain Hearst newspapers—apparently beating the presidential drums for General Douglas MacArthur—came out with highly critical editorials of Marine Corps tactics.”⁴⁵⁷

Aging media mogul William Randolph Hearst ran daily editorials in his newspapers during World War II called “In the News.” These editorials encompassed a

⁴⁵⁵ David Nichols, ed, “The Death of Captain Waskow,” *Ernie’s War: The Best of Ernie Pyle’s World War II Dispatches* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1987), 195-197.

⁴⁵⁶ Frank, *Denig’s Demons*, 46.

⁴⁵⁷ Frank, *Denig’s Demons*, 47.

“constant diatribe against Oriental barbarism—and an utter disdain for ‘the Jap’ in particular,” and often a running “commentary on American patriotism.”⁴⁵⁸ Among the highest praise doled out by Hearst in his editorials was his treatment of General Douglas MacArthur. Hearst’s papers helped to spread MacArthur’s beliefs about his superiority, especially when it came to the conduct of operations.

On February 27, 1945, Hearst plastered his “In the News” editorial on the front page of his flagship paper, the *San Francisco Examiner* with the title “MacArthur is our best strategist.”⁴⁵⁹ In it, Hearst harshly critiqued the navy and Marine Corps’ Central Pacific campaign as he stated “there is awesome evidence in the situation that the attacking American forces are paying heavily for the island, perhaps too heavily.”⁴⁶⁰ Hearst went on to state, “it is the same thing that happened at Tarawa and Saipan. If it continues the American forces are in danger of being worn out before they ever reach the really critical Japanese areas.”⁴⁶¹ Instead, Hearst suggested, “General MacArthur is our best strategist...HE SAVES THE LIVES OF OUR OWN MEN...Why do we not use him more, and indeed, why do we not give him supreme command in the Pacific war, and utilize to the utmost his rare military genius of winning important battles without excessive loss of precious American lives?”⁴⁶² Clearly, Hearst had an agenda, but the public heard loud and clear the idea that the Marines paid too high of a cost, and it was the by fault of their own leadership.

⁴⁵⁸ Ben Procter, *William Randolph Hearst: The Later Years, 1911-1951* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007), 236.

⁴⁵⁹ “MacArthur is our Best Strategist,” *San Francisco Examiner*, February 27, 1945.

⁴⁶⁰ “MacArthur is our Best Strategist,” *San Francisco Examiner*, February 27, 1945.

⁴⁶¹ “MacArthur is our Best Strategist,” *San Francisco Examiner*, February 27, 1945.

⁴⁶² “MacArthur is our Best Strategist,” *San Francisco Examiner*, February 27, 1945.

The next day, non-Hearst newspapers around the country reported not about Hearst's words and his call for Macarthur's leadership, but instead about the scene that developed at the *Examiner* the day before. Marines in San Francisco did not take well to Hearst's editorial. In papers around the country on February 28, 1945, it was reported that Marine veterans of the Pacific War rioted and stormed the offices of the *San Francisco Examiner*, demanding a retraction or the chance to rebut Hearst's argument. In the *Pittsburgh Press*, the headline declared "Marines Protest Hearst Editorial: Delegation Calls at San Francisco Paper." It was stated that "the 12th Naval District reported today that the shore patrol was called last night to the *San Francisco Examiner*, a Hearst newspaper, to disperse 75 to 100 Marines who had gathered in protest against a front page editorial yesterday."⁴⁶³ In the Hazleton, Pennsylvania *Standard-Sentinel*, it was reported that two Marines made it all the way to the editor's office. There was no violence involved with the riots, but the Marines made their point.⁴⁶⁴

Four days into the Iwo Jima campaign, however, a number of correspondents traveled with a Marine patrol to the top of Mt. Suribachi, the 556-foot volcano on the island, where the significance of the battle and of the war changed. On February 23, a 40-man patrol climbed to the summit of Suribachi and raised a small flag at the top. *Leatherneck* photographer Sergeant Lou Lowery took pictures of the whole event. A few hours later, after a dispute over who would take the first flag home, Marines ordered another patrol to replace the first flag with another, larger flag. Marine CC Bill Genaust escorted AP photographer Joe Rosenthal (since he could not carry a weapon) to the top of

⁴⁶³ "Marines Protest Hearst Editorial," *Pittsburgh Press*, February 28, 1945.

⁴⁶⁴ "Marines Protest Hearst Editorial," *Standard-Sentinel*, February 28, 1945.

the mountain with the second patrol even as the Japanese continued to defend the cave system within the volcano. At the top, both Rosenthal and Genaust lined up near each other to catch some images (moving pictures in Genaust's case) of the second flag-raising. It was in that moment that Rosenthal captured what became the most reproduced photo of all time, and Genaust captured the film to confirm its authenticity. The renowned flag-raising photo won Rosenthal the Pulitzer Prize for photography and the image became synonymous with the Marine Corps and victory in the Pacific.⁴⁶⁵

Identifying Iwo Jima as a positive turning point for the image of the Marine Corps would be an oversimplification. The Battle for Iwo Jima continued for another month *after* the flag-raising and claimed more than 28,000 American casualties, nearly 7,000 of which represented those killed in action, including Bill Genaust and six other CCs.⁴⁶⁶ Despite the Corps' relative success in bringing the stories of Marines to their hometowns, the themes of the Iwo Jima invasion were brutal fighting and high casualties. Marines who the Corps lauded as heroes from the early days of the war went to Iwo Jima and never returned. Medal of Honor recipient Sgt. John Basilone, who had become a household name because of his participation in War Loan Drives, was killed on the beach. Iwo Jima was an important test of the public's will to continue the fight.

While historians still debate the necessity of the Iwo Jima operation, American newspapers largely supported the Marines who fought there.⁴⁶⁷ It appears, though, that there may have existed an undercurrent of questioning about whether Iwo Jima was

⁴⁶⁵ Thomey, *Immortal Images*, 7-15.

⁴⁶⁶ Thomey, *Immortal Images*, 21.

⁴⁶⁷ For more information on the debates over the Battle for Iwo Jima, see Robert S. Burrell, *The Ghosts of Iwo Jima*.

worth the toll is exacted on young American men. Local newspaper editorials such as one published in the *Parowan Times* of Parowan, Utah argued to their readership that the capture of Iwo had significant value. Titled “The Cost of Iwo,” the editorial stated “It will be natural to ask whether the cost could have been less and whether the prize is worth the price...No doubt both mistakes and unexpected situations played their part. But they always do in a close battle. Iwo Jima was a key fortress in Japan’s whole system of inner defenses, just as Gibraltar and Malta have been in the Allied control of the Mediterranean.”⁴⁶⁸ With Iwo Jima, it seems that many Americans had to put aside the appalling numbers in order to support both the Marines who fought and died there, as well as the Corps’ and navy’s leadership who led those local men into withering fire.

By this time in 1945, the Corps’ ambitious publicity strategies began to wear on the press and the military establishment. The general who led those Marines onto the beaches at Iwo Jima, Holland “Howlin’ Mad” Smith, doubled down on tying the Corps’ reputation to the bloody battle. The *Los Angeles Times* reported on March 20, 1945 that General Smith “spoke a final word today for those who died so ‘there will always be a Marine Corps.’”⁴⁶⁹ General Smith went on to say “If there’s any question in anybody’s mind about the Marine Corps after the war, this Battle of Iwo Jima will assure them there’ll always be a Marine Corps.”⁴⁷⁰ It was statements such as these that in the long run generated a great deal of animosity toward the Marine Corps. The perception that the Marine Corps tried so hard to gain favorable publicity at every step of the war allowed conspiracy theories to develop, especially surrounding the flag-raising itself. In his book,

⁴⁶⁸ “The Cost of Iwo,” *Parowan Times*, March 23, 1945.

⁴⁶⁹ “We can Take Anything, Says Marine General,” *Los Angeles Times*, March 20, 1945.

⁴⁷⁰ “We can Take Anything, Says Marine General,” *Los Angeles Times*, March 20, 1945.

Immortal Images, Iwo Jima veteran Tedd Thomey recalled that “the press gave him [Rosenthal] no peace...They claimed that his photo was fake. They accused him of organizing the raising of the second flag and posing the men who hoisted it into the air because he had missed the first flag raising.”⁴⁷¹ It was because of this severe reaction to the Corps’ flag-raising publicity that Corps did its best to hide the fact that it had its own CCs on top of the mountain.⁴⁷²

High ranking military officers of the other services also noticed the Corps’ publicity drives in the midst of record casualties. Prominent army officers publicly remarked on their perception of the Corps’ public relations activities. After a relatively unpublicized battle in Europe, General George Marshall commented, “Had it been a Marine Division every phase of a rather dramatic incident would have been spread throughout the United States.”⁴⁷³ Generals Dwight D. Eisenhower and Douglas MacArthur also held a particular disdain for the Marine Corps’ public relations activities. Eisenhower’s naturally secretive nature and tight censorship policies throughout the war constantly hampered the Corps’ CCs in getting their stories back to the United States in a quick manner. MacArthur, despite his own self-aggrandizing publicity campaigns, was also annoyed at the Corps’ seemingly constant PR presence. At the amphibious landings of the Philippines (an army operation), the Corps’ CCs were on hand to cover the action of the single Marine air unit involved in the campaign. This led General Denig to comment that “the presence of public relations personnel with Marine aviation units in

⁴⁷¹ Thomey, *Immortal Images*, xviii.

⁴⁷² Thomey, *Immortal Images*, vii.

⁴⁷³ George Roeder, *Censored War: American Visual Experience During World War Two* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1993), 58.

the Philippines made it possible to provide the public information about Marine Corps activities in that sector which otherwise would have gone practically unannounced.”⁴⁷⁴

The casualty lists at Iwo Jima quickly became overshadowed as the war progressed both in the Pacific and in Europe. The Battle for Okinawa, begun less than a month after the close of the Iwo Jima campaign, claimed 12,000 American lives, and the projections for the assumed invasion of mainland Japan rose into the tens of thousands.⁴⁷⁵ With the war in Europe over, the public became even more aware of the casualties still emerging from the Pacific. Marine CCs continued to bring the public stories of the war. *The Daily Courier* of Connellsville, Pennsylvania published a column called “Notes from the Pacific,” which included nine short dispatches from Marine CCs. Most were lighthearted in nature and consistent with the typical CC prose. One such story highlighted the fact that “the roll call of the Third Tank Battalion, Third Marine Division, sounds like an excerpt from history’s Who’s Who, ranging from literati to the prize ring.” The story goes on to describe several Marines who have names like Pvt. Abraham Lincoln Chapman and Pvt. Romulus Remus Albu, Jr., all in the same unit.⁴⁷⁶

The themes of some of the stories became more somber. In an article in the *Miami Daily News-Record* of Miami, Ohio, called “They Do Rest in Peace,” Marine CC Master Technical Sergeant Gene Ward described the scene of the military cemetery on Okinawa. “As I look out over this quiet burial place and down the broad vistas of the island hills to the sea, I wish that those who loved these dead could know this place, could know amid

⁴⁷⁴ Lindsay, *This High Name*, 63.

⁴⁷⁵ Thomey, *Immortal Images*, 46.

⁴⁷⁶ “Notes from the Pacific,” *The Daily Courier*, August 3, 1945.

what tranquility their sons have found their final resting places.”⁴⁷⁷ For the public, the initial shock of Iwo Jima’s brutality was replaced with the realities of the continuing war, yet the image of the flag-raising persisted, representing victory over defeat and the return of a positive public image to the Corps.

Conspicuously absent from the vast majority of Joe Blow stories in World War II were the African-American Marines who were also on the same islands so contested throughout the Pacific War. African-American Marines, while often relegated to the still vital duty of logistics, advanced alongside their white Marine counterparts on Japanese-held islands under fire and many were killed or injured in the line of duty. Their absence in the newspapers, it appears, was not the work of the Marine Corps, but instead the workings of the segregated newspapers in the South at the time. This did not, however, prevent controversy regarding the Corps’ late introduction and alleged mistreatment of African-American Marines at times throughout the war.

The introduction of African-Americans to the Marine Corps in 1942, which was the last service to allow their enlistment, challenged the Marine Corps’ public relations strategy. It is clear that CCs reported about African-American Marines, however caution was used when it came to these stories. In the Memorandum for Combat Correspondents on October 30, 1943, a notice in the “About Your Copy” section warned that “whenever a man named in your copy is a Negro, be sure to identify him as a Negro. This is especially necessary for copy distributed by the Southern Procurement Division,

⁴⁷⁷ “They Do Rest in Peace,” *Miami Daily News-Record*, May 30, 1945.

inasmuch as Southern newspapers for whites do not publish Negro news or carry it on a separate page.”⁴⁷⁸

As training began at Montford Point, a segregated training center outside of Camp Lejeune in North Carolina, the treatment of the recruits and their experience there was well-documented by the press, especially African-American newspapers such as the *Chicago Defender* and *Washington Afro-American*. In July 1944, a scandal broke with the release of an article by the *Afro-American* on July 29, with the headline “18 Marines AWOL.”⁴⁷⁹ The article claimed that 18 Marines went AWOL from Montford Point with the objective to “reach the Navy Dept. higher-ups and newspapers to expose move to transfer 5,000 colored Marines from that camp to overseas duty and New Orleans, so that White Women Marine Reserves can occupy their current quarters.”⁴⁸⁰ The article went on to accuse the Marine Corps of failing to provide sufficient swimming training to African-American Marines, even after “a number of colored Marines died on Saipan because they couldn’t swim.”⁴⁸¹

These serious allegations and the perceived danger of the ensuing public reaction brought about a response from the Commanding Officer of Montford Point, Colonel Sam A. Woods. In a letter to the Commandant of the Marine Corps, Woods argued that “from reading Negro newspapers, it appears that a more effective program be instituted for disseminating favorable publicity to the Negro press relative to Colored Marine

⁴⁷⁸ “About Your Copy,” *Memorandum for Combat Correspondents*, October 30, 1943, 3.

⁴⁷⁹ “18 Marines AWOL,” *Washington Afro-American*, July 29, 1944.

⁴⁸⁰ “18 Marines AWOL,” *Washington Afro-American*, July 29, 1944.

⁴⁸¹ “18 Marines AWOL,” *Washington Afro-American*, July 29, 1944.

personnel.”⁴⁸² Woods was concerned that even “a very slight distortion of the true situation can be made to appear very unfavorable by those intent on criticism.”⁴⁸³ General John Marston, Commanding Officer at Camp Lejeune believed that it was not “advisable to counter such obviously untrue statements...by mere denials” and that “the establishment of an alert and active Negro public relations section at this Camp should be of value in disseminating favorable and untarnished publicity.”⁴⁸⁴

It is clear that Marine leadership took even the mere accusation of misconduct at Montford Point seriously. The commandant, Lieutenant General Alexander Vandegrift, forwarded the letter to General Denig for his advice. In response, General Denig added his advice and understanding of the newspaper featured in the story. Denig’s belief was that the article “is the type of story that may be expected from the *Afro-American*. This publication is rabid in trying to stir up trouble that will incite negroes to assert their rights even if these are not being abused.”⁴⁸⁵ Denig’s ultimate recommendation was in agreement with General Marston in that a public relations program be started at the camp and run by “qualified Negro Marines to assist in the production of unbiased copy pertaining to Negro Marines.”⁴⁸⁶ It is unclear if a public relations section was formalized

⁴⁸² Letter from Colonel S.A. Woods to Commandant of the Marine Corps and Commanding General, Camp Lejeune, “Publicity Pertaining to Colored personnel program,” August 7, 1944. Marine Corps Methods and Plans, Box 1468, Commandant’s General Correspondence, RG 127, NACP.

⁴⁸³ Letter from Colonel S.A. Woods to Commandant of the Marine Corps and Commanding General, Camp Lejeune, “Publicity Pertaining to Colored personnel program,” August 7, 1944. Marine Corps Methods and Plans, Box 1468, Commandant’s General Correspondence, RG 127, NACP.

⁴⁸⁴ Letter from General John Marston to Commandant of the Marine Corps, “Publicity pertaining to Colored personnel program,” August 14, 1944. Marine Corps Methods and Plans, Box 1468, Commandant’s General Correspondence, RG 127, NACP.

⁴⁸⁵ Letter from General Robert L. Denig to General John Marston, “Publicity pertaining to Colored personnel program,” August 17, 1944.

⁴⁸⁶ Letter from General Robert L. Denig to General John Marston, “Publicity pertaining to Colored personnel program,” August 17, 1944.

at Montford Point, though a few positive stories about the African-American Marines training there emerged shortly after this controversy.

While Denig's response is certainly curt at best, it does not appear that the general sought to prevent CCs from covering news about African-Americans in combat. In fact, around the same time as this controversy, newspapers published CC Sergeant Charles R. Vandergrift's story titled, "Negro Marine Unit Suffers First Casualties on Saipan." In the article, Vandergrift goes into great detail about the heroics of the African-American Marines at Saipan, who suffered their first casualties there. As with similar stories covering white Marines, Vandergrift called out the names and hometowns of many of the African-Americans he interviewed there, including their occupation and any action they saw on the island.⁴⁸⁷

The postwar period brought with it an end to the flexibility afforded to the CCs during World War II. With the creation of the Department of Defense in 1948, all public relations efforts were filtered through an even larger bureaucratic system. In no war after 1945 would the Marines achieve the same publicity with the American public as they had throughout World War II. As CC Alvin Josephy confidently noted, there were a "peculiar set of circumstances working in World War II that were just wonderful for this."⁴⁸⁸ The Marine Corps developed an institutional appreciation for public relations and the small size of the service, combined with the flexibility offered to Combat Correspondents, and the seemingly fly-by-night expertise of General Denig created an environment in which the Marine Corps developed a personal relationship with the American public. This was

⁴⁸⁷ Sgt. Charles R. Vandergrift, "Negro Marine Unit Suffers First Casualties on Saipan," *The Tipton (Indiana) Daily Tribune*, August 8, 1944.

⁴⁸⁸ Denig, interviewed by Frank and Josephy, May 24, 1967, 86.

made possible through the intelligent use of Joe Blow stories of human interest that were specific to the hometowns of the Marines they covered.

In 1949, during an intense debate over the unification of America's armed forces, Major John L. Zimmerman, director of the U.S. Marine Corps Historical Branch, posed a query in response to the massive public outrage over attempts within the government to disband the Marine Corps, arguing that "the question arises inevitably as to why such a befuddled and anachronistic organization has gained such a hold up on the American imagination."⁴⁸⁹ As the shadow of World War II continued to loom over these discussions, many continued to question Marine Corps' success in the creation of grassroots support for their small service. Thirty years later, prominent military historians also recognized the irony of the Corps' perceived elite status. Historian Dennis Showalter found that "the Corps is so commonly accepted as an "elite" that it is often awarded the adjective by the media even when being sharply criticized."⁴⁹⁰

The development of the Corps' modern public image, however, began decades before these questions were asked. In the early twentieth century, the Marine Corps, in line with the corporate world, sought out former newspapermen and journalists to begin professional public relations activities. The Corps also created the Marine Corps Publicity Bureau in 1911, which was charged with increasing the public awareness of the institution's purpose, mission, and history.⁴⁹¹ The Corps' success at publicity during

⁴⁸⁹ Major John L. Zimmerman, "Stand, Gentlemen!" United States Naval Institute *U.S. Naval Institute Proceedings* (75) 1949: 293.

⁴⁹⁰ Dennis Showalter, "Evolution of the U.S. Marine Corps as a military elite," *Marine Corps Gazette*, November 1979, 44.

⁴⁹¹ For more information on the early activities of the Marine Corps Recruiting and Publicity Bureau, see also: Robert Lindsay, *This High Name: Public Relations and the U.S. Marine Corps* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1956); Heather Marshall, "It Means Something These Days to be a Marine: Image, Identity, and Mission in the Marine Corps, 1861-1918," Ph.D. dissertation, Duke University, 2010; and

World War I was a matter of both act and accident, however, the knowledge gained from the activities of the Marine Corps Publicity Bureau during its first ten years would be transferred through some of its key players to those who oversaw the newly formed Division of Public Relations (DPR) in time for America's participation in yet another World War in 1941.

On March 15, 2011, in Tumon Bay, Guam, Iwo Jima veteran Oliver "Ollie" Cromwell, Jr. attended a symposium and veterans panel regarding the Battle for Iwo Jima. When asked about his service on Iwo Jima, Mr. Cromwell turned to his son Warren for a fresh copy of a personal news story regarding his action on Iwo Jima, a story recorded and written by a Marine Corps Combat Correspondent. Mr. Cromwell proudly gave everyone who asked a copy of his news clipping, which he received from his family while he was in the hospital recovering from wounds received in battle. The article was printed in his hometown newspaper in St. Louis, Missouri, and reflects the significance of the Joe Blow stories for the Marines and their communities.

The Marine Corps Combat Correspondent system during World War II allowed the Marine Corps to continue and strengthen nearly half a century of public relations efforts aimed at informing the American public about their mission and keeping the Corps' name in a good light. In attempting to answer the question posed by Major Zimmerman regarding why the Marine Corps has gained such a foothold in the psyche of the American public, the CCs of World War II represent one of the areas where the Marine Corps actively sought to create and maintain a positive relationship with the public. Due to their large size and permanent nature, the other military services did not always place the relationship in the same regard as the Marine Corps. After nearly 50

years of teaching the American public about its service, the Marine Corps created a public image that could withstand even the greatest outside pressure, be it from within the government as it was in the Unification Debates of the late 1940s and 1950s, or from the outside, as it was during the backlash against the military shortly after the American withdrawal from Vietnam.

CHAPTER V – DEATH IN TECHNICOLOR: CENSORSHIP, RECRUITING, THE BATTLE OF TARAUA, AND THE DEBATE OVER THE MARINE CORPS’ PUBLIC IMAGE IN THE SECOND WORLD WAR

Throughout World War II, the U.S. Marine Corps was criticized both at home and from within the military for its “blunt” offensive tactics in the Pacific. From enlisted men to officers, many in the other services felt that the Corps was not adept at the island assaults it had been assigned to perform, often suffering greater casualties than its critics believed necessary.⁴⁹² While the nature of the Corps’ offensive tactics in the Pacific are still of intense debate today, the Marine Corps largely embraced that ethos because it helped to develop the Corps’ image as an elite fighting unit. However, as the Marine Combat Correspondents delivered timely news and witty articles of human interest to the press in the United States, the Corps’ Department of Public Relations constantly grappled with the fine line between Marines portrayed as either elite warriors or cannon fodder. Through an analysis of the film *With the Marines at Tarawa*, and the criticism regarding the film’s depiction of dead and dying Marines, the Corps’ dedication to its public image as a warrior service become clearer.

The Battle of Tarawa and the film’s release occurred at a time when the Corps was facing changes of both government censorship and its recruiting process. These changes allowed the Marine Corps to gain favorable publicity from its success in these battles, yet at a cost to the recruiting of seventeen-year-olds, a self-imposed requirement

⁴⁹² Harold J. Goldberg, *D-Day in the Pacific: The Battle of Saipan* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2007), 222. Some of the most vigorous arguments regarding the Marine Corps’ offensive tactics can be found in relation to what is known as the “Smith-Smith Debate.” This “debate” began when Army Major General Ralph Smith was relieved of command by Marine Major General Holland M. Smith because he perceived the Army general was moving too slow during the Battle of Saipan.

to keep up its “all volunteer” image.

The conduct of America’s censorship activities in World War II can be summed up by three primary motives: the feedback and public opinion of censorship in World War I, motivating the public to buy war bonds, and combating war weariness.⁴⁹³ Censorship during the war itself can largely be categorized into two phases: 1941 to mid-1943 and late-1943 to 1945. During the first phase, censorship, particularly of visual imagery, was strong handed. In his book, *The Censored War*, George H. Roeder, Jr. describes the newsreels and images of this period as puff pieces like travel documentaries, rather than hard-hitting wartime realities.⁴⁹⁴ By the end of the war, however, the U.S. government released even the most gruesome images of late-war graves registration activities as a way to keep the American public apprised of the cost of war.

At the onset of war, the government did not approach censorship activities in a vacuum. Instead, public opinion experts such as Elmer Davis, the head of the Office of War Information (OWI) sought to ensure that the U.S. did not make the same mistakes it made during World War I, in which strong censorship of all activities in Europe prevented much of the American public from viewing the realities of arguably the most destructive war to that date. As a result, the Roosevelt Administration directed Davis and the OWI, as well as the military, to help the public understand and even cope with the

⁴⁹³ Scholars who wish to delve further into censorship in World War II should first consider George H. Roeder, Jr.’s, *The Censored War: American Visual Experience During World War II* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1993). Roeder’s book is considered the best scholarship to this date on the subject, though it is in no way a comprehensive study. Rather, it is a collection of visual essays to summarize censorship during the war.

⁴⁹⁴ Roeder, *The Censored War*, 18.

realities of war, particularly the death and destruction, while omitting only the most sensitive of operational military matters.⁴⁹⁵

One of the subtler ways in which the U.S. influenced censorship activities during the war was instigating the public to buy war bonds. Lessons learned from the successes and failures of the first two War Bond Drives indicated that the more trauma and realistic depictions of war the public was exposed to, the more likely they were to buy war bonds. The OWI stated of its lessons learned, that “the strongest appeal in making people buy bonds [is] the casualty lists.”⁴⁹⁶ So ingrained was this idea, that in early 1944, there was even discussion at the level of Secretary of the Treasury Henry Morgenthau, Jr. to consider opening the purchase of war bonds to soldiers overseas. In a meeting about the War Bond Program on February 2, 1944, Morgenthau said “these people who have been up there and have seen the thing, saw people die all around them--they are buying the bonds; most likely eighty or ninety percent of their pay, whatever it is, is going into bonds. If we can do it, I think it would be awfully good. And it is novel. I think they would enjoy it. I mean, it would be kind of fun for them.”⁴⁹⁷

Historian George Roeder adeptly considered the government’s censorship activities during World War II a “rationing of death.”⁴⁹⁸ It is easy to see how the idea of rationing fits well into the narrative of censorship. Very early in the war, the rationing was tight because the government not only needed time to poll public opinion, but the

⁴⁹⁵ Roeder, *The Censored War*, 19-21.

⁴⁹⁶ James J. Kimble, *Mobilizing the Home Front: War Bonds and Domestic Propaganda* (College Station, TX: Texas A&M University Press, 2006), 67.

⁴⁹⁷ Henry Morgenthau, Jr., *February 2, 1944: Meeting on War Bond Program*. Diary Entry. From Franklin D. Roosevelt Presidential Library and Museum, *The Henry Morgenthau, Jr. Diaries*. <http://www.fdrlibrary.marist.edu/resources/images/morg/md0984.pdf>. (accessed July 2, 2017), 330.

⁴⁹⁸ Roeder, *The Censored War*, 7.

slow pace of battles in the Pacific and the unsure position of the U.S.'s ability to fight effectively still weighed on American minds.⁴⁹⁹ By late 1942, with the victory at Midway secured and the U.S. fast carrier task forces harassing the Japanese in their sphere of influence, as well as American troops fighting their way across Africa, the government favored loosening the rationing of death. This way the public could see that the war was not to be taken for granted and they would sell more war bonds. War weariness played an important part in decisions around rationing censorship as the war pressed into 1944 for the United States. While the Roosevelt Administration, the OWI, and the Treasury all favored at one time or another the practice of lifting the censorship restrictions in late 1943 and early 1944, the effects of the battle in Europe, with Americans now on European soil, as well as the multiple fronts in the Pacific forced them to consider the public's exposure to war.

For the Marine Corps, as in World War I, the layers of censorship bureaucracy played an important role in the coverage it received throughout the war. Even as the Corps focused on local news items and Joe Blow Stories to reach the public in a "local" way, the Corps also made sure its trained cameramen could produce footage good enough for Hollywood. Material from the front had to go through both navy and army censors in order to reach headlines, but for film footage, it also had to go all the way through the OWI as well.

While mid-1943 was a period of change for censorship in the U.S., it was also a time of change for recruiting and mobilization, especially for the U.S. Marine Corps. Up until December 1942, the Marine Corps was fulfilling its quotas with volunteers at

⁴⁹⁹ Roeder, *The Censored War*, 8.

staggering rates. In the weeks following Pearl Harbor, the Marine Corps was accepting nearly 6,500 volunteers a week, compared to a pre-war weekly high of just over 550.⁵⁰⁰ Not only were volunteer rates exceptional to this point but also the Marine Corps avoided high rejection rates as they advertised to recruits the direct potential to see battle early in the war.

A small example of the ways in which the Corps' Division of Public Relations advertised to its target audience can be seen in the "Japanese Hunting Licenses" created and sent to potential recruits. One of those licenses from the Corps' Central Recruiting District read:

JAPANESE HUNTING LICENSE

FREE AMMUNITION AND EQUIPMENT - WITH PAY.

Present this Certificate to the Officer in Charge, U.S. Marine Corps Recruiting Station, Room 356, U.S. Court House, Chicago, Illinois.

Introducing _____

Who is interested in learning details regarding enlistment in the U.S. MARINE CORPS. Please see that he is shown every courtesy and consideration.⁵⁰¹

The publicity effect of these "hunting licenses" was highly successful. In a 12 August 1942 memo from General Denig, the Marine Corps' Director of Public Relations, requested an order of 20,000 more "hunting licenses" for the Washington headquarters to

⁵⁰⁰Allan R. Millett, *Semper Fidelis: The History of the United States Marine Corps* (New York, New York: Macmillan Publishing Co., Inc., 1980), 360.

⁵⁰¹ *Japanese Hunting License*, William P. McCahill Papers, Box 1. Marine Corps University Archives, Alfred M. Gray Research Center, Quantico, VA (MCUA).

distribute to their mailing lists.⁵⁰² The aim of the hunting licenses was to recruit the fittest and most “war-ready” recruits so that the Corps did not have to reject as large of a percentage as the other services.

In the early years of World War II, the Marine Corps posted strong numbers of volunteers and enlistments, due in large part to the public image the Corps built in the first part of the twentieth century. Major General Commandant Thomas Holcomb also played a prominent role in the Corps’ ability to grow as an organization from roughly 35,000 before the war, to 233,000 by the end of 1943.⁵⁰³ In December 1942, however, President Franklin D. Roosevelt fundamentally altered the Corps’ recruiting strategies with Executive Order 9279, which forced the service to solely allow enlistments through the Selective Service system. For the Marine Corps, EO 9279 was not just an organizational change, it was a change in the entire recruiting culture. Throughout the twentieth century, the Marine Corps focused on its status as a volunteer-only service, and in some ways, depended upon its ability to draw volunteers as a way to weed out men the Marines did not feel were fit to join.

In order to circumvent the Selective Service requirements while still both following the law and accepting volunteers, the Marine Corps lowered the age of volunteer enlistment to seventeen. While these young men were allowed to volunteer at seventeen-years-old, they were not allowed to start their service until they were eighteen

⁵⁰² *Japanese Hunting Licenses*, Robert L. Denig to Public Relations Officer, Central Recruiting Division, August 12, 1942, Marine Corps Methods and Plans - Public Relations, Box 1468, Entry A1 18-B Office of the Commandant of the Marine Corps, General Correspondence, 1939-1950, Record Group 127 (RG 127). National Archives and Records Administration, College Park, MD (NACP).

⁵⁰³ Marine Corps Historian David J. Ulbrich’s book *Preparing for Victory: Thomas Holcomb and the Making of the Modern Marine Corps, 1936-1943* (Annapolis, MD: Naval Institute Press, 2011) lays out the successes of Commandant Thomas Holcomb and his exceptional organizational abilities.

when they would be directly enrolled into the Marine Corps Reserve. Perhaps the most important factor in the volunteer enlistment of seventeen-year-olds, was that they had to have a parent or guardian's permission to volunteer. Convincing a young man to join the Marine Corps and fight for his country took a specific type of recruiting. Convincing a parent to allow their child to volunteer for the war was quite another.

As the Marine Corps began to grapple with the prospect of recruiting seventeen-year-olds, a major change in the way the U.S. dealt with the growing casualty numbers emerged to complicate the Corps' transition. At the time, both military leaders and the Roosevelt Administration felt that the public was not ready for the casualty numbers that were to come. Popular images of casualties broadcast to many Americans in the theaters of the day showed smiling American GIs in ambulances and bloodied, but never bleeding soldiers and sailors. The fear of a misconception on the part of Americans about the casualties and realities of the battlefield led the Roosevelt Administration to seek a more lenient approach to censorship, especially as it pertained to casualties.⁵⁰⁴ It was during this period of the more lenient policy on casualties that the navy and Marine Corps invaded the Tarawa Atoll in November of 1943.

On the island was Marine Corps combat cameraman Staff Sergeant Norman Hatch with his motion picture cameras ready to capture footage for a training film, though instead he created a piece of wartime and film history. Norman T. Hatch, known as Norm, was born in 1921 in Boston, Massachusetts. Hatch's father, Irving Hatch, was an engineer in the motor industry and in 1927 was transferred to Chicago to help the

⁵⁰⁴ Steven Casey, *When Soldiers Fall: How Americans Have Confronted Combat Losses from World War I to Afghanistan* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2014), 58-60.

struggling Stutz Motor Company. While in Chicago, the Hatch family lived in a hotel that also happened to be occupied by infamous Chicago gangster Al Capone. Irving Hatch, a Pinkerton Detective in his younger days, had numerous dealings with Capone and his men as Stutz also built armored vehicles. Irving Hatch was unable to keep his job in the throes of the Depression and moved the family back to Gloucester, Massachusetts in 1931. In high school, Norm Hatch became fascinated with the military and joined his school's ROTC program. It was also in high school when Hatch became interested in photography and took classes to learn how to use a simple Kodak camera.⁵⁰⁵

As the younger Hatch also struggled to find good work in the Depression economy, he looked into joining the military so that he could learn a trade and get a good job when he got out of the service. Having been around the ships in Gloucester for much of his teens, Hatch naturally tried to join the U.S. Navy. Hatch's father also thought that the navy would be the safest service if war came and it offered the most opportunities to learn a trade.⁵⁰⁶ Unfortunately, the navy was filled to its small quotas with men in similar situations and Hatch was told he had to be patient and wait for his number to be called. After waiting for a full year to get into the navy, Hatch finally went down to the Marine Corps recruiting station in the same building instead. Upon asking to join, he was immediately offered the chance to raise his right hand. On July 7, 1939, Hatch was sworn into the Marine Corps and received orders to head to boot camp in South Carolina.⁵⁰⁷

⁵⁰⁵ Charles Jones, *War Shots: Norm Hatch and the U.S. Marine Corps Combat Cameramen of World War II* (Mechanicsburg, PA: Stackpole Books, 2011), 23-26.

⁵⁰⁶ "Major Norman Hatch Oral History Interview, 2007-05." From Library of Congress, Veterans History Project. Film. <https://memory.loc.gov/diglib/vhp-stories/loc.natlib.afc2001001.60276/mv0001001.stream> (accessed July 3, 2017).

⁵⁰⁷ Jones, *War Shots*, 25-27.

Hatch was unlike many of the other Marine Combat Correspondents in that he gained all of his training in writing, public relations, and film from the navy and Marine Corps and not from a related civilian field. Near the end of his time at Marine boot camp, Hatch saw an ad on the bulletin board for an English Teacher at the Marine Corps Institute in Washington, D.C. The same Marine Corps Institute started by former Commandant John A. Lejeune, and born out of his progressive ideals to create a more educated and specialist Marine Corps. Hatch figured he “had no problem with English in high school,” so he applied, and within weeks found that he was heading to Washington, D.C.⁵⁰⁸ While he held the title of English teacher, Hatch instead acted as a glorified copy-editor for Marines around the world, correcting spelling and grammar for the large swath of Marines who were not native English speakers at the time. While the English teaching position did not turn out to be as interesting as Hatch had imagined, his time at the Marine Corps Institute gave him the necessary experience to move into other areas of the Marine Corps that dealt with writing and editing. Hatch applied to *Leatherneck Magazine* and became the Associate Editor there. His experience at *Leatherneck* offered an extensive understanding of Marine Corps history, lore, and culture, and all of the Corps’ activity both in the U.S. and abroad as he edited the “Sound Off” column, answering questions from Marines around the world.⁵⁰⁹ *Leatherneck* also offered to Hatch the opportunity to familiarize himself with government printing businesses and to get to know the military circles around Washington as he managed the printing of the Marine Corps’ official magazine.

⁵⁰⁸ Jones, *War Shots*, 33-34.

⁵⁰⁹ Jones, *War Shots*, 38-41.

In early 1941, Hatch left *Leatherneck Magazine* for a post with the navy's Office of Public Relations (OPR). At this point in 1941, the navy's OPR was not yet a publicity machine geared up for the war. Instead, like the Marine Corps' languishing Publicity Bureau, the navy's OPR was more of a government printing office and photographic distribution center than an organization directly geared toward a conversation with the public. An April 1941 article in the *Washington Post* summed up the navy's approach to public relations in the context of the new commanding officer for the OPR. The sub headline read "Officer Is in Favor Of Giving the People A Maximum of Facts," and went on to declare that "Heretofore public relations - all publicity dealing with the navy - has been a branch of the Office of Naval Intelligence. A divorce of the two has been advocated because Naval Intelligence, an office handling such matters as espionage, naturally places the emphasis on secrecy."⁵¹⁰ Hatch's job at the navy OPR was located at the navy headquarters, then called "Main Navy," and involved nothing more than sharpening pencils and delivering navy press releases to the D.C. press corps, visiting newspapers, radio stations, and other studios. Once again, this provided Hatch the opportunity to get to know the area's press agents and other important people in the news industry, but according to Hatch, the job did not well enough stimulate his growing interest in the military news apparatus, especially his continued interest in photography.⁵¹¹

Norman Hatch's path toward the field of motion pictures, like many of his other staff changes, came from an advertisement on the bulletin board at Main Navy. In

⁵¹⁰ Edward T. Folliard, "Knox Chooses Admiral Hepburn to Direct Navy's Department of Public Relations," *Washington Post*, April 13, 1941.

⁵¹¹ Jones, *War Shots*, 41-43.

multiple oral histories, Hatch has said that he always paid close attention to the bulletin boards. Hatch desired to be a motion picture photographer, and a “bulletin came on the bulletin board...and it said that there would be training established at the “*March of Time*” for some navy and Marine personnel.”⁵¹² The *March of Time* was a short film and newsreel program established by *TIME, Inc.* in the 1930s. In Hatch’s words, what separated the *March of Time* from other newsreels was that they produced twenty-minute short documentaries, rather than the typical ten-minute fact-based newsreels released by most companies at the time.⁵¹³ Each short film combined newsreel footage with interviews and dramatizations in order to provide context and realistic drama to the typical newsreels of the day. The *March of Time* films were presented between films at theaters all over the world.⁵¹⁴ Hatch applied to the *March of Time* three separate times as a Private First Class and was denied every time. Fortunately for Hatch, a director at the *March of Time*, was at Main Navy one day and let Hatch know that the *March of Time*’s Producer, Louis de Rochemont was coming to town and that he could deliver some reels to him to get some face-to-face time. At the meeting, Hatch and de Rochemont talked for an hour and by the next day Hatch had orders to go to the *March of Time* in New York City.⁵¹⁵

⁵¹² “Norman T. Hatch Oral History Interview, 2003.” From Nimitz Education and Research Center, National Museum of the Pacific War, *Digital Archive*. Audio.
<http://digitalarchive.pacificwarmuseum.org/cdm/ref/collection/p16769coll1/id/1592> (accessed July 7, 2017).

⁵¹³ “Major Norman Hatch Oral History Interview, 2007-05.” *Veterans History Project*.
<https://memory.loc.gov/diglib/vhp-stories/loc.natlib.afc2001001.60276/mv0001001.stream>

⁵¹⁴ Jones, *War Shots*, 43.

⁵¹⁵ “Major Norman Hatch Oral History Interview, 2007-05.” *Veterans History Project*.
<https://memory.loc.gov/diglib/vhp-stories/loc.natlib.afc2001001.60276/mv0001001.stream>

Hatch began his training at the *March of Time* in October 1941 and began to learn the art form as well as he could through close observation of the professionals around him. Hatch largely performed menial tasks for the *March of Time* producers and directors such as setting up lights and other equipment, but he attributed his own skill with the camera to his time watching the professionals. Soon after the attack on Pearl Harbor, de Rochefort directed Hatch to pack up some equipment and head straight down to Washington, D.C. as he anticipated a declaration of war. Hatch and the *March of Time* crew were able to get set up in the Capitol Building and witnessed Roosevelt's famous "Day of Infamy" speech.

While the Marine Corps was bolstered by half a century of publicity and attention to its image, the Corps was not ready to document the war when it finally came. Many Marines were particularly upset about the lack of coverage of the fighting at Wake Island on December 11, 1941. As previously discussed, the newly established Division of Public Relations (DPR), headed by Brigadier General Robert L. Denig sought to make sure that Wake Island became the center point of the Corps' broadcasting plan during those early days. On January 6, 1942, President Roosevelt mentioned the Marines at Wake Island in his State of the Union speech. The Corps' response to this perceived compliment was swift. In a January 19, 1942 letter from Brigadier General Denig to the commanding officer of Marine Corps Plans and Policies, Denig stated that "it is felt by the Division of Public Relations that a historic occasion of this nature will be of great interest to the personnel of the Corps and of assistance for the recruiting service."⁵¹⁶ Wake Island was

⁵¹⁶ The Director, Division of Public Relations to The Director, Division of Plans and Policies, "The Motion Picture of the President's Address on the State of the Union," January 19, 1942, 1260-10: Advertising

also featured heavily in the radio broadcasts paid for by the Marine Corps in the months after the start of the war and even the *March of Time* did a documentary on the battle.

The Marine Corps leaned on Norm Hatch to help get the Corps' photographic section up to par before he reported to back to Quantico. So desperate was the Marine Corps for motion picture photographic equipment that Hatch was ordered to scour New York City for used cameras and other 35-millimeter equipment that the Marine Corps could use.⁵¹⁷ The photography industry had simply not expected the surge in demand when the war started, and most of the new cameras were bought up immediately by America's news organizations as well as the far better funded army and navy. Some of the best cameras at the time were also German and as such were banned from importation.

By October 1942, now Staff Sergeant Hatch had joined the 2d Marine Division Photographic Section in San Diego, California. He was joined there by another motion picture photographer, Staff Sergeant Johnny Ercole, who also attended the *March of Time* training program. Hatch and Ercole still needed to acquire higher quality cameras and film for their own work, so they both went to Hollywood to find new equipment. One of the places where they stopped was film manufacturer, Technicolor.

Technicolor played an important role in film history as the first mass produced color film. The Technicolor process utilized three separate film strips of colors (red, blue, and yellow) in the filming process, which created color, whereas prior to this development, most color in film was added in post-production. Technicolor built on their

Purposes, Box 197, Entry A1 18-B Office of the Commandant of the Marine Corps, General Correspondence, 1939-1950, RG 127. NACP.

⁵¹⁷ Jones, *War Shots*, 59.

success of the three-strip color film with iconic color motion pictures such as *The Wizard of Oz* and *Gone with the Wind*. That particular type of film, however, was enormously expensive and heavy and would have been burdensome for Marine photographers, assuming they could have afforded it in the first place. Technicolor, however, had designed a new single-strip color film, much like Kodak Kodachrome, called the Technicolor *Monopack*, which created vibrant color footage in a portable and cost-effective manner.⁵¹⁸ The Technicolor staff gave Hatch and Ercole a tour of the factory and offered them 1,000 feet of *Monopack* film ready for field use.⁵¹⁹

Ultimately, Hatch and Ercole put out a call across all Los Angeles radio stations for 16-millimeter cameras to be donated to the Marine Corps for the war effort. The Marine Corps is often known as the service which can accomplish the most with the least. This is certainly an instance where the Marines did not have tremendous financial support like the army and navy, nor the celebrity motion picture directors such as Frank Capra, John Huston, and John Ford, to pull their weight around in Hollywood, yet they were able to scrape together the equipment necessary to document their combat experiences.

In early 1943, Staff Sergeant Norm Hatch traveled with the 2d Marine Division to New Zealand to train and prepare with for the upcoming invasion. The photographic section of the 2d Marine Division was led by Louis “Louie” Hayward, a famous South African turned naturalized-American actor. Hayward was best known for his leading roles in Hollywood.⁵²⁰ After the Pearl Harbor attack, Hayward became a naturalized

⁵¹⁸ Scott Higgins, *Harnessing the Technicolor Rainbow: Color Design in the 1930s* (Austin, TX: University of Texas Press, 2007), 81.

⁵¹⁹ Jones, *War Shots*, 66-67.

⁵²⁰ Jones, *War Shots*, 86.

citizen of the U.S. and joined the Marine Corps.⁵²¹ There were fifteen officers and men in the photographic section that landed at Tarawa and 2 of those photographers were killed during the battle.⁵²²

In the Pacific War, Operation Galvanic, the capture of Tarawa in November 1943, was considered an early battle. While the Marines were battle-tested at Guadalcanal and other areas of the Southwest Pacific Area (SWPA), the V Amphibious Corps landing at Tarawa with traditional Higgins landing craft and the newer amphibious tractors (amtracs) was still a young operation. As the U.S. Army and Navy acquired strongholds in the SWPA, a second operation was launched across the Central Pacific. The Central Pacific drive, carried out primarily by U.S. Navy fast carrier task forces, consisted of simultaneous airstrikes as far north as the Bonin Islands and as far west as the Caroline Islands in the Pacific to both soften up defenses in those areas and to divert attention away from the amphibious invasions that took place. With Midway Island secured by mid-1942, the U.S., with its industrial capacity growing by the day, set out a plan to move across the Pacific, a renewal of the original battle plans ORANGE and RAINBOW laid out in 1920s. As Japan showed the first signs of being on its heels, the U.S. sought to put its offensive power into play in multiple points across the Pacific in order to force the Japanese to stretch their defense lines as thin as possible.

One of the first major amphibious invasions in the Central Pacific drive was at Betio Island in the Tarawa Atoll. The size of Betio island lent much to the brutality of the

⁵²¹ Peter and James Neushul, "With the Marines at Tarawa," *U.S. Naval Institute Proceedings* (April 1999): 74-79.

⁵²² Memorandum for Combat Correspondents from the Department of Public Relations, December 11, 1943. Subject: Combat Correspondents, Reference Branch, Marine Corps History Division, Quantico, VA.

battle. Betio island, at 1.5 square kilometers in area is sometimes referred to as half the size of Central Park.⁵²³ At two miles long and in some places less than 700 yards wide, however, it is more akin to a modern-day airport runway and with only a few more terrain features. When World War II reached the picturesque Pacific sands of Tarawa, the tiny strip of sand and palm trees became a compact killing ground.

Based on intercepts from broken Japanese naval codes, U.S. intelligence predicted there were roughly 2,500-3,000 Japanese troops on the island. This turned out to be fairly accurate, but what that intelligence and even pre-invasion aerial reconnaissance was unable to gather, however, were the lengths at which that Japanese dug into the island in order to protect themselves from the terrific American bombardment, both from the air and sea. Throughout the island, the Japanese built concrete bunkers that would withstand anything but multiple direct hits from naval shells or aerial bombs. These bunkers proved to be the most difficult obstacles on the island. The Japanese defensive strategy was that of a defense in depth. The Japanese knew that the 3,000-strong garrison at Betio could not hold off an entire American division. The defense was created, however, to slow the Americans down enough so that there would be time for the Japanese navy to respond with their own submarine and carrier strikes on the vulnerable American transports sitting off the island.⁵²⁴ For the Americans, there was little doubt prior to the invasion, that the only way to come away from Tarawa victorious would be to destroy the entire Japanese garrison on the island.

⁵²³ John Wukovits, *One Square Mile of Hell: The Battle for Tarawa* (New York, NY: Penguin Books, 2006), 63.

⁵²⁴ Henry I. Shaw, Jr., Bernard C. Malty, Edwin T. Turnbladh, *Central Pacific Drive: History of U.S. Marine Corps Operations in World War II*, vol. 3, (Washington, D.C.: Historical Branch, G-3 Division, Headquarters, U.S. Marine Corps, 1966), 48-49.

The 2d Marine Division, slated to take the island as part of the V Amphibious Corps, was comprised of roughly 18,000 Marines. For the invasion, the amphibious assault was planned to land first on the northern beaches of Tarawa, dubbed Red Beaches 1, 2, and 3. Landing at these beaches would allow the Marines to take immediate control of Betio's deep water pier and position them to cut across the middle of the island in order to divide the Japanese troops. Only the 2d and 8th Marines would take part in the initial assault, with the 6th Marines held in corps reserve. With the support troops also slated for follow-on landings, this meant that based on assault personnel alone, the Marines landed at Tarawa with roughly 2-1 advantage, a number that did not sit well with the 2d Marine Division's commander, Major General Julian Smith.

On 20 November, the 2d Marine Division assaulted the beaches of Betio Island. Amphibious planners knew ahead of time that the depth of the water would be an issue for the Marines. While aerial reconnaissance photos greatly aided in the creation of objectives on land for the Marines, they did not provide much information about the coral reefs and the depth of the water moving in. This led to one of the most important lessons the Marines learned, which was the importance of beach reconnaissance and underwater demolition teams to reconnoiter the invasion beaches. While the Marines would have the coral-hopping amtracs available to them, still more than half of the Marines would board Landing Craft Vehicle, Personnel (LCVPs) or traditional low-draft Higgins boats. These craft were well-suited to invasions onto sandy beaches, but when faced with the razor sharp coral reefs and a draft of less than 3 feet deep, they were rendered ineffective.⁵²⁵ Another variable the Marines faced were the tidal conditions. At certain times of the year,

⁵²⁵ Shaw, Maltby, Turnbull, *Central Pacific Drive*, 29-32

a neap tide condition would exist, where the tides became extremely unpredictable. Even Maj Gen Julian Smith was aware that the chances of the tide being deep enough for the LCVPs to cross the reef was roughly 50/50.⁵²⁶ Neap tide created a condition where high tide was much lower than most every other day of the year. Unfortunately for Smith and for the Marines, the neap tide was extremely low on 20 November.

The first wave consisted of Marines in the amtracs, able to clear the coral reef and drive the Marines straight up to the island.⁵²⁷ While the amtracs proved effective in getting the troops ashore, their place as the first vehicles in the assault meant that the majority of those vehicles were knocked out prior to or just after reaching ashore. With the amtracs knocked out on the beach, they were not able to return to the ships to pick up more Marines and guide them shore. Once the majority of the amtracs (the Marines had 100 for the assault) were out of commission, the follow-on waves only had the LCVPs available. The LCVPs could only get the Marines as far as the coral reef.

Once they hit the reef, the Marines had to disembark into the coral and wade roughly 500 yards in the water to the shore. This, of course, proved dangerous for a number of reasons. The coral reef was extremely dangerous to cross for the Marines as they were weighted down by their gear. Any holes they encountered had the potential to severely injure a Marine's leg in the best scenario, or cause the Marine to be submerged completely, which, with their heavy equipment might mean they could not get themselves out. The amtracs were also an obvious point of concentration for Japanese fire. Once past the coral reef, the slow-moving Marines were exposed to a hail of Japanese fire with no

⁵²⁶ Shaw, Maly, Turnbladh, *Central Pacific Drive*, 31

⁵²⁷ Captain James R. Stockman, *The Battle for Tarawa* (Washington, D.C.: Historical Section, Division of Public Information, Headquarters, U.S. Marine Corps, 1947), 11.

effective cover. The fact that Marines had to wade ashore at Tarawa became one of the most reported tactical errors for the Marine Corps in the Pacific. Newspapers in the U.S. latched onto to this fact in order to show the Marine Corps had actually committed a blunder. While some historians have defended the Corps' choice to go ashore during neap tide and with LCVPs, the fact remains that it was an event that defined the battle.⁵²⁸

Not timid to get the shots they needed in battle, Staff Sergeant Norman Hatch and his assistant, Private First Class Kelly Kelliher managed to get into one of the first waves ashore on Betio while much of the Marine photographic section was still shooting color footage aboard the ships of the fleet. Hatch and Kelliher were in the command boat of the 2d battalion, 8th Marines with its commanding officer, Major Henry P. "Jim" Crowe. The 2d battalion, 8th Marines was assigned with the task of securing Red Beach 3, which was the closest beach just to the east of the long pier. The boat in which he was riding was one of the fateful LCVPs, which meant that Hatch, with all of his camera equipment, had to wade ashore.

As photographers, particularly motion picture photographers, Hatch and Ercole carried a tremendous amount of gear. According to Hatch, together they had 200 pounds of gear. The men both had a 35-millimeter Eyemo camera, as well as "eight Bell & Howell 16-millimeter autoloader motion picture cameras, which shot color film and were favored more by the Marine Corps than any other service branch; the 35-millimeter Wahl sound camera...a number of four-by-five Speed Graphics," as well as chemicals, paper

⁵²⁸ Jones, *War Shots*, 89. Historian Charles Jones cites an argument from Joseph Alexander in his book *Utmost Savagery: The Three Days of Tarawa* (Annapolis, MD: Naval Institute Press, 1995), 71, in which he argues that if the tide had been higher, it would have actually hidden the obstacles the Japanese left on the shore and perhaps would have caused more damage to incoming boats than going ashore.

and other supplies. The photographers also carried 10 cans of film, totaling 1,500 feet, and three-lens spider turrets. On top of their photographic gear, they both carried a pistol and ammunition.⁵²⁹

This was a heavy load for the men, especially as they navigated their way ashore. The LCVP they were in had a failure of the loading ramp, so they both had to crawl over the side of the vehicle and essentially fall into the water. Once in water, both men had to stand-up completely straight as they walked in order to keep the film equipment dry. Fortunately, they were fairly protected by the pier from incoming fire and they used it for cover all the way to shore. Once ashore, Hatch and Kelliher sought to find cover and set up their cameras to begin capturing images of the other Marines pinned down on the beach by gunfire. The two photographers caught up with Major Crowe and his command post foxholes and they continued to film the Marines and the naval and air gunfire raining down on the Japanese.

The initial beach assault on Tarawa was a tremendous struggle for the Marines. The amtracs of the first wave were able to get a number of battalions ashore, but the Marines were pinned down on the beach. Many companies experienced between 25% to 50% casualties. Major General Julian Smith committed another battalion to the battle in an attempt to continue the momentum on the shore before noon as he knew that the key to any amphibious invasion is to hold and then push through the beach. The size of the island and proximity of the bulk of Japanese forces, just by the nature of the island made it very difficult for the Marines to move forward. Marines remembered the waves hitting their feet as they fought for their lives and a hold on the beach. The U.S.'s hope was that

⁵²⁹ Jones, *War Shots*, 91.

by the end of D-Day, Marines would have cut across the center of the island and defeated the majority of Japanese resistance. However, at the close of D-Day, the Marines had made it not quite halfway across the island, and not yet to the airfield's runway, which was one of their main objectives.

Unbeknownst to Hatch, he was one of the only motion picture photographers on the island that first day. Every other photographer was either capturing color film from the ship, failed to find a spot on a landing craft, or, as in the case of one Marine motion picture photographer and his civilian counterpart, their landing craft was capsized or destroyed. Alongside, Hatch, however, was Robert Sherrod, a civilian correspondent with *Time*. Sherrod was also accompanying Major Crowe and his battalion. Sherrod's news pieces and eventual book on Tarawa became seminal histories of the battle and civilian coverage of the war. Sherrod's stories about Tarawa often end up sounding much different than Hatch's retelling of events. For Hatch, the battle was a canvas on which to project a story that could be made into a film such as the *March of Time* newsreels. In later interviews, Hatch admitted that viewing the battle through the lens of his camera offered him an escape from the realities of what was going on around him.⁵³⁰ Hatch was also trained as a combat Marine before he ever got into the motion pictures he was creating. While Sherrod the civilian correspondent had a nearly identical experience to Hatch in terms of his journey to shore and his location on the battlefield, his more realistic telling of the battle was that of fear, chaos, and death. Sherrod highlighted the death he saw around him, particularly the sudden and random nature of it all.

⁵³⁰ "Major Norman T. Hatch Oral History Interview." From U.S. Naval Institute, *Americans at War Collection*. Film. <http://www.americans-at-war.com/videodetail.php?id=13> (accessed July 7, 2017).

On the second day of the battle, Hatch and Kelliher continued to film the Marines fighting across the island. Japanese snipers were all over the island and they had even taken up in some of the half-sunken landing craft out to sea, putting the snipers at the Marines' backs. The objectives for the day largely comprised the concrete Japanese bunkers strewn across the island. None of the American firepower levied on these blockhouses had the intended effect. The Japanese were still able to hide out and continue to pick off the Marines who approached. Using dynamite and flamethrowers, the Marines cleared out the command posts one-by-one. Hatch captured much of this type of fighting on film, including one of the most important shots, a group of Japanese soldiers escaping a bunker with the Marines who caught them in the same shot. While this proved to be the only moment on film of both sides in combat in World War II, it would be the images he caught after the battle was over that would garner America's attention.

The Battle for Tarawa continued for another day, totaling 76 hours of combat for the Marines. The Marine Corps lists its casualties for the invasion at roughly 1,000 dead and 2,200 wounded, with a total of 3,300 casualties. Nearly all of the Japanese on the island were killed or too wounded to fight or commit suicide. Most of the prisoners captured on the island were Korean laborers. The Americans captured several other islands in the atoll with far less cost in human life, including Makin and Apamama. The airfield at Tarawa was immediately put into use as a forward operating base for navy and U.S. Army Air Forces aircraft to strike the next line of Japanese defenses.

Tarawa was a defining battle for the Marine Corps. The nickname "Bloody Tarawa" was created as news of the casualties began to reach the U.S.⁵³¹ General

⁵³¹ Jones, *War Shots*, 130.

Douglas MacArthur, commander of the Southwest Pacific Area, and critic of the navy's drive across the Central Pacific, predictably expressed his unease about the Corps' assault on the tiny atoll, writing that "these frontal attacks by the Navy, as at Tarawa, are a tragic and unnecessary massacre of American lives."⁵³² In the newspapers back in the U.S., the initial headlines of the invasion took a strikingly heroic tone regarding the "bold" capture of the Japanese held islands. Based on headlines such as "U.S. Air Forces Wreck Jap Bases at Tarawa," it was perhaps easy to believe that American forces would not face tremendous opposition.⁵³³

News of the battle's toll, however, began to ramp up as Americans celebrated Thanksgiving. By November 27, 1943, the headlines began to focus more heavily on the casualties. In an article titled "Marines' Toughest Battle," war correspondent Richard Johnston of the *Chicago Tribune* wrote that "No victory in American military history was attained at a higher price."⁵³⁴ In another article on that day, the *New York Times* published Secretary of the Navy Frank Knox's warning that the public should expect severe casualty reports in the coming days and weeks. Knox stated that "the American losses undoubtedly were considerably less than the estimated Japanese casualties of approximately 4,000."⁵³⁵ At roughly 3,300, however, American casualties were not far behind the Japanese.

For the Marine Corps, the public's perception of the Battle of Tarawa was a defining moment, both for its image as a hard fighting service on the "tip of the spear,"

⁵³² Col. Joseph Alexander, *Across the Reef: The Marine Assault on Tarawa* (Washington, D.C.: History and Museums Division, HQ U.S. Marine Corps, 1993), 50.

⁵³³ "US Air Forces Wreck Jap Bases at Tarawa," *The Honolulu Advertiser*, November 23, 1943.

⁵³⁴ Richard W. Johnston, "Marines' Toughest Battle," *Chicago Tribune*, November 27, 1943.

⁵³⁵ "Tarawa Life Loss Heavy, Knox Warns," *New York Times*, November 27, 1943.

but also at a moment when maintaining its volunteer image was crucial for recruiting. The Battle at Tarawa, and particularly the news of terrible casualties at Tarawa, came at a time when the Roosevelt Administration felt it needed to shock the nation into understanding the cost of war. Even after the North African and Italian campaigns tallied over 10,000 casualties, the Tarawa invasion came at the moment when the government eased up on censorship and allowed not only the casualty statistics, but also the images of the battle it released.⁵³⁶

The news of the battle as it was distributed in the states certainly built up a visceral sense of the gore, even without the images. In a *Chicago Tribune* article, correspondent Robert Trumbull reported:

This island was won over the dead bodies of United States Marines. Betio fell because the Marines kept coming. As those in front of them died, other Marines took their places. Finally, a force of men was able to get on the beach. This battle was the bloodiest mess ever seen. Today, 24 hours after the last organized Japanese resistance ended, riddled corpses form a ghastly fringe along the narrow white beaches where men of the 2d Marine Division died for every foot of the sand. It is impossible to look in any direction from any point on this island, which is less than one square mile in area, without seeing bodies of Marines and Japanese.⁵³⁷

This was, in fact, a natural progression of the government's push to acclimate the public to the horrors of war, and "bring the cost of this war in human lives directly to the people."⁵³⁸

⁵³⁶ Casey, *When Soldiers Fall*, 58.

⁵³⁷ Robert Trumbull, "Marines Charge Into Certain Death On Betio," *Chicago Tribune*, November 28, 1943.

⁵³⁸ Roeder, *The Censored War*, 19.

While some historians see the press' focus on the toll at Tarawa as "bad press," the Division of Public Relations lauded the work that was released to the public by its Marine Combat Correspondents.⁵³⁹ A December 11, 1943 issue of the Memorandum for Combat Correspondents lauded, "In the Tarawa action our combat footage functioned for the first time as it is supposed to function."⁵⁴⁰ The Marines at the DPR knew that the battle of Tarawa, including the death, destruction, and gore told the story for them and was well within parameters of the Corps' public image.

Rather than bad press, the Marines of the DPR, who were tasked with managing the Corps' sacred image, likely saw the battle at Tarawa as the true beginning of the Marine Corps' participation in the war as far as its public image was concerned. The drawn-out battle for Guadalcanal, which ended with the Japanese escaping the island, was not the statement for the Corps' image that Tarawa became by early 1944. In the press, the Corps' struggle at Tarawa was soon compared to iconic American battles. In *TIME*, Robert Sherrod placed Tarawa into the annals of American history. "Last week some two to three thousand U.S. Marines, most of them now dead or wounded, gave the nation a name to stand beside those of Concord Bridge, the Bonhomme Richard, the Alamo, Little Big Horn, and Belleau Wood. The name was Tarawa."⁵⁴¹

Norm Hatch, now 22-years old, survived the battle and his footage was immediately flown stateside. Fortunately for him, he had handwritten his name on all of his film reels, which allowed him direct credit for the footage that was coming out at

⁵³⁹ Jones, *War Shots*, 130.

⁵⁴⁰ Memorandum for Combat Correspondents from the Department of Public Relations, December 11, 1943. Subject: Combat Correspondents, Reference Branch, Marine Corps History Division, Quantico, VA.

⁵⁴¹ Robert Sherrod, "Report on Tarawa: Marines' Show," 24; "A name to Remember," *Time*, December 6, 1943, 15, as cited in Wukovits, *One Square Mile of Hell*.

home. Small portions of his footage were released to the public in December for use as shorts in the newsreels. Officers at the DPR knew that Hatch's footage was excellent, especially as there was so much good color footage to accompany the black and white combat scenes.⁵⁴² Hatch remembered that he was recalled back to the U.S. quickly after the battle. While he figured he was in trouble, he realized when he returned that he had actually become somewhat of a celebrity. A local public relations officer drove him around San Francisco and showed Hatch his name on all of the marquees around town, a rare occurrence for military photographers.⁵⁴³ When Hatch returned to Washington, he was brought to a personal meeting with the Commandant of the Marine Corps, Major General Alexander Vandegrift and sent down to Quantico to teach Marine photographers preparing for the next invasion.

The footage shot by Hatch and the Marine photographers at Tarawa gained notoriety across the country for its realistic presentation of the horrors of war. President Roosevelt, while in favor of showing pictures of the realities of war, reportedly went back and forth on the decision to release the most gruesome images of the film. In a letter from Sherrod to *TIME* Associate Editor David Hulburd on December 28, 1943, Sherrod recalled a conversation with President Roosevelt that lasted for twenty minutes after the President completed a press conference that afternoon. As Sherrod recalled, "The President said: 'What do you think of these pictures at Tarawa - I think we ought to release them.' He added: 'They are pretty gory-they show a lot of dead.' I made the pat answer: 'War is pretty gory, Mr. President,' and said I thought they certainly should be

⁵⁴² Memorandum for Combat Correspondents from the Department of Public Relations, December 11, 1943. Subject: Combat Correspondents, Reference Branch, Marine Corps History Division, Quantico, VA.

⁵⁴³ Jones, *War Shots*, 128-129.

released.”⁵⁴⁴ It is unclear whether there were further conversations between Roosevelt and either the Joint Chiefs or the War Information Committee on the release of the film. While much of the combat footage was released in snippets to the newsreels, there were still a great number of gory scenes to be published before the film was released.

The Joint Chiefs of Staff invited Major Frank Capra, one of the greatest directors of the time, to help Hatch and the Marine Corps create a short documentary film out of the footage from Tarawa.⁵⁴⁵ Hatch’s youth and laid-back personality caught Capra’s attention and as part of the Fourth War Loan Drive in February 1944, he first produced a short called *I was There Tarawa*. In it, Hatch stands casually at the film processing table of the *Army-Navy Screen Magazine* cutting room while receiving praise for his work and bravery. Hatch recalls that between him and Kelliher they shot 5,000 feet of film, with Hatch claiming only 2,000 feet, a remarkably small amount of film for so much of it to be immediately ready for release.⁵⁴⁶ Hatch then moves over toward the projector and begins to narrate a newsreel-esque presentation of his footage.⁵⁴⁷ The 11-minute film only showed Hatch’s black and white footage, but included Marine dead and dying on the beaches, though no close-ups and none in color.

Director Frank Capra and the Motion Picture Industry wing of the War Activities Committee spent \$115,000 to edit, narrate, and compose the final product.⁵⁴⁸ *With the*

⁵⁴⁴ Robert Sherrod to David Hulburt, December 28, 1943, Box 12, Robert Sherrod Lee Papers, Syracuse University Special Collections Research Center.

⁵⁴⁵ Wukovits, *One Square Mile of Hell*, 259.

⁵⁴⁶ Peter Maslowski, *Armed with Cameras: The American Military Photographers of World War II* (New York, NY: Free Press), 73.

⁵⁴⁷ “I Was There Tarawa,” February 1944. Film. Posted by Periscope Film, January 6, 2013. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=H-YoC53XQVU> (accessed July 22, 2017).

⁵⁴⁸ Arthur L. Mayer (War Activities Committee) to Lieutenant Commander Alan Brown, USNR, February 23, 1944. Subject: *With the Marines at Tarawa*, Reference Branch, Marine Corps History Division, Quantico, VA.

Marines at Tarawa was released on March 2, 1944, and was shown in theaters across the country as an intermission short between feature films. On March 1, 1944, the *Hattiesburg American* ran a review of the film titled “Tarawa Movie Will Erase Your Apathy,” in which the Associated Press (AP) reporter, Jack O’Brian, noted that the film was nearly rejected for release because the images were too gory for public consumption. “Even with the most horrible scenes deleted, it is by far and away the most powerful war documentary this reviewer has seen to date.”⁵⁴⁹

The final cut of the film *With the Marines at Tarawa* mixed together both color motion picture footage from photographers aboard the ships and Hatch’s black and white combat footage from the front lines. An analysis of the footage and narration provides an interesting perspective into the ways in which both the Marine Corps and Hollywood perceived the Battle of Tarawa and how they wanted the public to view the battle, especially with such raw footage included. The film begins with color scenes of Marines boarding ships and the convoy’s voyage to Tarawa. Early on, the narrator dictates the strategic importance of Tarawa as a Japanese airfield at the “outer fringe of their Pacific defenses.”⁵⁵⁰ Footage of men at religious services show both younger and older men, which creates for the viewer a snapshot of the American public, rather than just “young boys off to war.” As the fleet arrived off Tarawa, shots of the American bombardment are shown in color. In one of these shots, the water is a crystalline aqua. This shot and others

⁵⁴⁹ Jack O’Brian, “Tarawa Movie Will Erase Your Apathy,” *Hattiesburg American*, March 1, 1944.

⁵⁵⁰ “With the Marines at Tarawa,” March 1944. Film. Posted by National Archives and Records Administration (NARA), February 19, 2014. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JolhiCbU_u8 (accessed July 8, 2017).

that show the tremendous beauty of the islands bring the viewer a visceral sense of place, especially compared to much of the black and white footage from Europe.

Unlike the reality of the battle, the narrator voices no sense of tension in planning or execution of the invasion. In the film, everything rolled off like clockwork. The narrator casually states that teamwork and preparation made this a perfect amphibious assault. This is an interesting claim, especially because the news reports that came from the battle heavily featured the fate of the Marines who had to wade ashore. The film shows both LCVPs and amtracs going ashore, playing down the availability of the latter, which was limited for the battle. The Marines are next shown infamously wading ashore in Technicolor. The photographer is on a ship far off in the distance, yet the shot again provides the contrast of beauty (water, beach, and palm trees), and impending death. The narrator then describes a “pretty good toehold on the beach,” but even the visuals betray that statement with nothing but a sea of heads poking up from hastily made foxholes. Both wounded and dead Japanese and Americans are shown early on in the film.⁵⁵¹

Once ashore, the film clearly switches from the vibrant colors of the motion picture photographers out to sea and turns back to Hatch’s black and white footage. The combat action in the film is immediately chaotic and aggressive, probably showing how the combat was on these islands better than any other film at the time. Men shooting at unseen objects and flamethrowers going off in the same scene, smoke and fire everywhere. One of the scenes that sets the film apart from any other in the war takes place in the eighth minute. Hatch captured one of the rarest forms of combat footage:

⁵⁵¹“With the Marines at Tarawa,” March 1944. Film. Posted by National Archives and Records Administration (NARA), February 19, 2014. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JolhiCbU_u8 (accessed July 8, 2017).

both U.S. and Japanese troops in the same shot. Many thought that it was a staged effort, though the Marines in the shot were clearly caught off guard by the Japanese running out and were only able to pull their weapons up seemingly too late. The Marine on the left fires his weapon, only to realize that it was futile given the amount of Japanese (roughly 15) running from the bunker. He immediately lowers his weapon and tries to fish grenades from his bandoleer. The scene appears to be anything but staged.

When compared to seeing our military in action today, the Marines in the film, some without helmets and their uniforms open, often seem as if they are on R&R. They seem, in some ways, uncoordinated. This, of course, is merely the chaos of battle showing through. They were clearly cautious and tentative as they snuck up on supposedly cleared bunkers. As a parent, these moments, aside from the dead Marines shown later, certainly came across as some of the tensest. The parents watching the film might have thought that their son was the one with the pistol looking into the bunker while everyone else waited in the safety behind. There are other moments as well where the Marines' veneer of invincibility briefly cracks. On top of a hill (the viewer has no conception of what is behind it, except the faceless enemy), Marines are shown using one of the deadliest weapons in their arsenal: flamethrowers. A Marine fires his flamethrower and (perhaps predictably) it nearly jumps out of his hand, looking more like a cartoon firehose than a deadly fire-breathing weapon. This brief moment gives the viewer the feeling that the Marine is perhaps young and inexperienced, not what a parent wants to see of their child in a film.⁵⁵²

⁵⁵² With the Marines at Tarawa," March 1944. Film. Posted by National Archives and Records Administration (NARA), February 19, 2014. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JolhiCbU_u8 (accessed July 8, 2017).

About halfway through, the film shows the Japanese dead from the major action just before. The narrator coolly states that the Japanese are “savage fighters and their lives mean nothing to them.”⁵⁵³ Color footage on the island begins again soon after this. The coral dust and the heat are palpable. The narrator states that “by now we know the Japs are licked, and they must know it too,” however the battle lasted for two more days. The film is out of order according to Norm Hatch’s memory of the fighting that day. This would most likely be in order to get more of the color film into the footage.

As film deals with the dead and dying Marines, the narrator addresses the graves registration activities, and specifically chaplains roaming the beaches and picking up one of the two dog tags on each of the dead Marines. “So there’ll be no mistake later on.”⁵⁵⁴ Unfortunately, what happened to the dead of Tarawa became one of the more significant graves registration blunders of the war. While these chaplains did their duty by the book, shortly after these Marines were buried on Tarawa, their grave markers were moved in order to beautify the cemetery. Subsequently, a major runway was built on top of those graves and they were lost for nearly 70 years, until the Defense POW/MIA Accounting Agency was able to re-locate them and identify many of the missing Marines.

How the film deals with the casualties, not just dead but also wounded, was significant as well. The narrator discusses the wounded, assuring the audience that throughout the process, all of the wounded are attended to by navy doctors and corpsmen.

⁵⁵³ “With the Marines at Tarawa,” March 1944. Film. Posted by National Archives and Records Administration (NARA), February 19, 2014. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JolhiCbU_u8 (accessed July 8, 2017).

⁵⁵⁴ “With the Marines at Tarawa,” March 1944. Film. Posted by National Archives and Records Administration (NARA), February 19, 2014. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JolhiCbU_u8 (accessed July 8, 2017).

When the first dead Marines are shown strewn across the beaches, no faces are shown. The film is bleached out, so blood is difficult to see. Rifles are sticking up to mark their bodies among the miscellaneous debris alongside them. The narrator then states that “this is the price we pay for the war we didn’t want,” as the camera pans up to show seemingly endless dead Marines along the beach. The most gruesome shot of the film is a brief close up of a dead Marine, clearly rigid from rigor mortis and either burned or bloated from the sun and heat. The top of his head is red and there is clearly blood running down the side of his arm. His face is not clear with the blood and disfigurement, rendering him unrecognizable to those watching. What follows was one of the most reproduced images of the battle: dead Marines floating against the shore, many face-up and also bloated from rigor mortis. No faces are shown here, but the display of the dead as if they were no different than the flotsam around them is certainly a dire picture.

A burial at sea is shown next. Perhaps the ritual and pomp among the Marines and sailors during the ceremony is enough for some families, but for many, a family member buried at sea is a just another missing soldier who is no longer considered missing by the military. The narrator lists the casualty numbers and states that “Tokyo once boasted it would cost 100,000 soldiers to take the island. We lost less than 1,000, while the Japanese lost over 4,000.” As the film closes, the Marines raise the flag, the narrator states in first person that “we were mighty proud.”⁵⁵⁵ The final footage of the film shows the Marines who fought the battle marching all together in unison as if they were

⁵⁵⁵ “With the Marines at Tarawa,” March 1944. Film. Posted by National Archives and Records Administration (NARA), February 19, 2014. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JolhiCbU_u8 (accessed July 8, 2017).

marching on to the next battle, and the film closes with the Marine Corps Eagle, Globe, and Anchor, with the words Semper Fidelis.

The public reception of the movie in the newspapers was roughly what the Marine Corps and the Roosevelt Administration expected. The film was advertised heavily in hundreds of cities across the country as an accompanying feature to the major motion pictures of the day. The reviews and previews of *With the Marines at Tarawa* made sure the public knew what to expect from the film. There were few publicly critical newspaper articles regarding the footage and its effect on viewers. However, a March 13, 1944 article in the *La Grande Observer* of La Grande, Oregon offered a cynical tone in its preview of the film citing that it was “A picture that cost a human life” for a reel.⁵⁵⁶ A reason for the positive public reception might be that some theaters edited or cut out the most gruesome scenes of the film, choosing to act as local censors. In a full-page advertisement of the film in the *Hattiesburg American*, the Royal Theater published a “note” regarding the film, which stated “Even though the most gruesome parts of this film have been eliminated, still no one can see this picture and ever again complain of the hardships of ‘The Home Front.’ Taxes, rationing, scarcity, high prices...all fade into insignificance after you have witnessed the invasion of Tarawa.”⁵⁵⁷

At the Corps’ Division of Public Relations, however, the response by both the public and the Corps’ own recruiters caused an intense debate that lasted through May 1944. There were clearly two separate and competing beliefs about the effect of showing dead and dying Marines to the public. The pressure of recruiting 17-year-olds into the

⁵⁵⁶ S. Burton Heath, “Tarawa Filming Cost Two Lives in Battle, *La Grande Observer*, March 13, 1944.

⁵⁵⁷ R.O. (Bob) Sigler, “A special message to the people of Hattiesburg, Forrest County and South Mississippi,” *Hattiesburg American*, March 14, 1944.

Marine Corps in order to maintain its “volunteer” status left Marine recruiters across the country, but especially on the West Coast, having to deal with upset parents and lower recruiting numbers as a result of the film. The officials of the DPR, however, felt strongly that the film enhanced the Corps’ image, especially to 17-year-olds and was therefore a broad success.

On March 16, 1944, Colonel Ralph West (USMC), the officer in charge of recruiting for district of San Francisco, sent a scathing letter to the head of the Western Procurement District which stated “the undersigned complained against the publication in the press of photographs featuring dead, dying, and wounded Marines, and against the public exhibition in commercial motion picture houses of factual films such as ‘The Marines at Tarawa,’ especially in technicolor, showing numerous scenes of dead, dying, and wounded Marines engaged in combat, the technicolor adding to the gruesomeness of the scenes and the spilling of blood.”⁵⁵⁸ West claimed that it was “reliably reported to him,” that the film causes “women to faint and men to vomit.”⁵⁵⁹ West argued that “this type of publicity is harmful to the Marine Corps recruiting program in this District because it causes parents to refuse consent to the enlistment of their 17-year-old sons in the Marine Corps on the grounds that Marine Corps service is too dangerous.”⁵⁶⁰ As proof of the negative impact on the Corps’ recruiting process, West attached the statements of several Marine Corps recruiters who experienced the perceived blow-back

⁵⁵⁸ OIC Western Procurement Division to OIC Department of the Pacific, “Unfavorable recruiting publicity,” March 23, 1944. Marine Corps Methods and Plans - Public Relations, Box 1468, Entry A1 18-B, 1939-1950, RG 127. NACP.

⁵⁵⁹ OIC to OIC Western Procurement Division, “Unfavorable recruiting publicity,” March 16, 1944. Marine Corps Methods and Plans - Public Relations, Box 1468, Entry A1 18-B, 1939-1950, RG 127. NACP.

⁵⁶⁰ OIC Western Procurement Division to OIC Department of the Pacific, “Unfavorable recruiting publicity,” March 23, 1944. Marine Corps Methods and Plans - Public Relations, Box 1468, Entry A1 18-B, 1939-1950, RG 127. NACP.

daily. West reinforced the validity of their statements by listing the educational and career backgrounds of all 19 recruiters.

All of the recruiters cited serious concerns regarding the effect of *With the Marines at Tarawa* as well any other films that might be in the works. Staff Sergeant Charles W. Gann argued that “such scenes appealed only to the morbidly curious. Parents of boys serving overseas were left with a depressed feeling and many expressed their disapproval towards viewing such films.”⁵⁶¹ Staff Sergeant Sanford M. Berenson noted that publicity such as this film give “the impression that the Corps is the ‘Suicide branch of the Armed Forces.’”⁵⁶² Multiple recruiters argued that the Marine Corps was the only branch showing these types of images. While this was not true, the perception of the Corps as the branch that most often showed its dead was a damning one for these recruiters. Staff Sergeant A.W. Stremmel offered the most vivid description of the public’s reaction to the images in the film. “Women and young girls were crying and expressing their opinions to their escorts that the Marine Corps would be the last branch of the armed services of the United States that would allow any of their relatives to enter if they had anything to do with it.” “The picture was morbid and nauseating. From a news standpoint it contained only the belated message that everyone knows, the fact that the Marines captured Tarawa. The fact that the display of bodies of dead Marines is intended to spur every individual on to a great war effort is defeated.”⁵⁶³

⁵⁶¹ Charles W. Gann to OIC District Headquarters Induction and Recruiting Station (DHIRS), San Francisco, March 21, 1944. Marine Corps Methods and Plans - Public Relations, Box 1468, Entry A1 18-B, 1939-1950, RG 127. NACP.

⁵⁶² Sanford Berenson to OIC DHIRS, March 21, 1944. Marine Corps Methods and Plans - Public Relations, Box 1468, Entry A1 18-B, 1939-1950, RG 127. NACP.

⁵⁶³ A.W. Stremmel to OIC DHIRS, March 21, 1944. Marine Corps Methods and Plans - Public Relations, Box 1468, Entry A1 18-B, 1939-1950, RG 127. NACP.

In response to Colonel West's damning letter, the Division of Public Relations immediately sent out a memorandum to all recruiting sergeants across the country requesting them to respond with a letter as to whether the films and images of dead Marines "act as a deterrent or as an incentive for enlistment of 17-year-olds."⁵⁶⁴ It was clear that Colonel West's experiences took the officials at the DPR by surprise, and in order to qualitatively analyze the problem, the DPR essentially polled recruiters across the entire country. It is not clear if the responses presented in the collection represent every single response to the request, however, the report does include positive, negative, and mixed results from the recruiters.⁵⁶⁵ Many of the responses were also from the Western Recruiting District since the original report stemmed from the West Coast. In their replies, the unnamed recruiting sergeants offered a glimpse into the Corps' recruiting strategies, especially as it came to the younger 17-year-olds.

The response from the Seattle District succinctly represented the DPR's primary belief about the effect of these images on the American public. In their response to the DPR, the District of Seattle reported that "the personnel of this office unanimously agree that combat pictures depicting the hazards of battle and casualties are an incentive to 17-year-olds, as most of the applicants, we find, are urged by the spirit of adventure rather than by any other opportunity the corps might offer."⁵⁶⁶ The "spirit" of the Marine Corps *is* the Corps' public image and the DPR wanted the public to believe that the Marine

⁵⁶⁴ C.R. Payne, undated. Marine Corps Methods and Plans - Public Relations, Box 1468, Entry A1 18-B, 1939-1950, RG 127. NACP.

⁵⁶⁵ All District Headquarters Stations to Division of Public Relations, undated. Marine Corps Methods and Plans - Public Relations, Box 1468, Entry A1 18-B, 1939-1950, RG 127. NACP.

⁵⁶⁶ Ibid.

Corps would go into the toughest fights and win the day, no matter the cost. The recruits that responded positively to that public image were exactly the type of men (and by this point, women also) that the Marine Corps wanted to incentivize.

The responses in the negative all took a similar line of argument as those submitted by the recruiters of the San Francisco area. The District of Butte responded that “Mothers and fathers who saw that picture are going to feel, reasonably enough perhaps, that the day of their son’s enlistment should be postponed as long as possible. Sisters, knowing their enlistment means the transfer of a male Marine to combat duty, may share that opinion.”⁵⁶⁷ The Marines of the District of Butte offered that perhaps in future films there be “increased stressing the intensive Marine Corps training as a protective measure in combat. This might counteract valid Tarawa scenes and any other legitimately newsworthy films in which Marines are rendered ‘hors de combat’.”⁵⁶⁸

Memoranda from Public Relations Officers (PROs) around the country largely rejected the findings of Colonel West and his recruiters. The conclusions the DPR drew from their surveys was that, while some 17-year-olds were not able to join because their parents were upset by the film, “it is not felt that the showing of the picture was ill-advised.”⁵⁶⁹ PRO Captain Merlin Sterling argued that “All media of public information have long since established the Marines as hard-hitting assault troops. No far-reaching damage could have been done to recruiting as the man who selects the Marine Corps generally wants combat action and the ‘fighting Marine’ reputation is probably the chief

⁵⁶⁷ Ibid.

⁵⁶⁸ Ibid.

⁵⁶⁹ Captain Milton Sterling to Director, Division of Public Relations, May 1, 1944. Marine Corps Methods and Plans - Public Relations, Box 1468, Entry A1 18-B, 1939-1950, RG 127. NACP.

attraction in most enlistments. The Tarawa film supports that traditional conception of the Marines admirably.”⁵⁷⁰

The film *With the Marines at Tarawa* and the battle itself played important roles in the development of the Marine Corps’ public image. While the Marines suffered terrible losses at Tarawa, the public perception of the battle fit directly in line with the Corps’ public relations goals and values. The powerful frontal assault of the tiny atoll conducted almost wholly by Marines, while drawing the post-battle ire of army officers, was an ideal story to tell the public, both during the war and long after. Tarawa immediately became one of the most iconic battles of the war and far from disappointed, the Marine Corps embraced Tarawa into its mythology. For the invasion of Iraq in 2003 the 2d Marine Expeditionary Brigade was called Task Force Tarawa. This was certainly no mistake or impromptu move on the part of the Marine Corps as those Marines surely embraced the correlation of their war with that of World War II. The navy has also commemorated Tarawa with a ship of that name continuously from 1945 to the present, with the amphibious assault ship USS *Tarawa* (LHA-1).

The film *With the Marines at Tarawa* went on to win an Academy Award for Best Short Subject Documentary in 1944. While Hatch was not named in the credits for the Oscar, his work with the Marine Corps proved to be a defining moment. Hatch went on to film more seminal Marine Corps events, including the Battle of Iwo Jima and air attacks on Japan. Had the Marines fought for the island of Tarawa in any earlier than late 1943, it is possible the film would never have received the credit it did due to the realistic images of war it portrayed. While it was certainly an impressive piece of combat film, showing

⁵⁷⁰ Ibid.

both sides in one shot, it was its depiction of the horrors of war that made it an important work to the Roosevelt Administration and the Marine Corps. While the Marine Corps had an intense internal debate over its impact on the recruiting of 17-year-olds after Selective Service was imposed, the DPR's stance on the film remained that the film was not only important in order to place Tarawa into the mythos of the Marine Corps, but also to incentivize potential recruits who wanted to be at the "tip of the spear."

CONCLUSION

The military services of the United States are instruments of American diplomacy, but they are also reflections of American society. The case of public relations and the U.S. Marine Corps between 1898 and 1945 provides a lens through which historians can view how one of those services interacted with the American public and the successes and repercussions of this unique approach to civil-military relations. The Marine Corps faced unparalleled obstacles in its pursuit of a secure place in the U.S. military. This peculiar position, however, placed Marines in a condition of constant defense for their own existence, thus creating a powerful drive for survival. The disadvantages the Corps had to overcome, including its small size, arguably redundant mission, and relative obscurity at the turn of the twentieth century, led the Marines to take their case to the public. In an unprecedented campaign of open dialogue with the American people, the Marine Corps overcame its limitations and emerged as heroes—a true elite fighting force in the public imagination.

While the Marine Corps as an institution did not begin the twentieth century with an explicit knowledge of the power of public relations, its ability to deploy to the locations at which the nation needed them most, and the Corps' positive impression upon war correspondents from Cuba to China displayed the effectiveness of good publicity. From the turn of the twentieth century, the Marine Corps built and maintained its image in the public eye. Beginning with the Spanish-American War, the Marine Corps' participation in "small wars," not only sent Marines to the corners of the earth but also gained a constant state of publicity from which the public could identify the Marines as either the protectors of Democracy or tools of American expansion to new frontiers. In

either sense, the word Marine increasingly came before the public in the first decade of the twentieth century. The public remained entranced with the actions of Marines in places like the Caribbean and the Pacific, areas of the world considered America's new frontiers.

Beginning as early as 1903, government agencies began to recognize the effectiveness of public relations precedents set in the private sector in the years before. As the use of public relations began to take hold within the federal government, the U.S. military began to employ public relations principles in order to bolster recruitment and appropriations. The Marine Corps' development and use of a Publicity Bureau was essential in its ability to capitalize on an emerging tool for institutions to organize and control its relationship with the public. With the foresight of Marines including Thomas G. Sterrett and others, the Recruiting and Publicity Bureau introduced its crowning achievement, *The Recruiters' Bulletin*. Through the *Bulletin*, Marines at the Publicity Bureau in New York could provide advice to the recruiting stations across the country. With the experience of former newspapermen and those versed in public relations, Marine recruiters gained the ability to take the case of the Marine Corps to local newspaper editors with the Corps' groundbreaking use of press releases in daily newspapers.

The First World War brought with it the ability for the Marine Corps to allocate a more assets toward recruiting and advertising along with the national mobilization effort. While the *Recruiters' Bulletin* and the Publicity Bureau in New York continued to work at full capacity in order to gain publicity, the Corps' leaders, including Commandant George Barnett successfully lobbied for Marines to travel with the first troops to Europe

in order to fulfill the advertising promise of being the “first the fight.” The First to Fight campaign itself proved to be an incredibly powerful publicity slogan as it not only drew in recruits, but also reinforced the Corps’ image as a fighting unit. Much to the chagrin of leaders in the army, the Marines managed to maintain a constant spotlight upon their actions through clever advertising campaigns and the constant focus on keeping the Corps’ name in front of the public.

Even though Marines represented a very small percentage of the troops fighting in France, their very name allowed news of their actions to pass through the strict guidelines of wartime censorship. With the stories of Floyd Gibbons, as well as media fascination that occurred over now traditional icons, including the term “Devil Dogs,” the Marine Corps managed to emerge from the war with far more credit to their name than was proportional to their part in the entire war. Regardless of this fact, the Corps maintained a focus on these exploits, thus creating and solidifying myth and legend with in the WWI record of the Marines.

The First World War had done much for the publicity of the Marines and it was then the duty of the Corps’ leadership to preserve public image momentum into the conservative 1920s and legitimize the public image the Corps developed. When Major General John Archer Lejeune succeeded Major General George Barnett as commandant in 1920, he immediately began to reorganize the Marine Corps from headquarters down. Lejeune, the Marine, was a student of the Naval Academy and the U.S. Army War College, all of which offered him strong credibility in both the military and political realms. Having commanded an army division in the First World War, there was not much Lejeune had not accomplished, allowing him tremendous flexibility in reforming the

Corps during his eight years as commandant. Lejeune introduced sweeping reforms, including a new system of promotion and the establishment of the Marine Corps Schools, a predecessor of the Marine Corps Command and General Staff College and the Marine Corps Institute, which helped enlisted Marines develop their careers both in and out of the Corps. His reforms institutionalized professionalism in the Marine Corps and the establishment of a Marine Corps Historical Center helped to solidify the Corps' focus on the preservation and publication of its history for the future. Lejeune continued the legacies of the *Recruiters' Bulletin* by maintaining a focus on the Corps' image and a drive for public relations. Even small reforms, such as the establishment of a mandatory Marine Corps Birthday celebration every year, helped to mythologize the Corps' traditions.

Conservatism and budget cuts in the 1920s forced General Lejeune to reduce both personnel and funding to the recruiting section of the Marine Corps, yet the progressive commandant volunteered Marines for various different highly publicized events. Lejeune never forgot the importance of keeping the Marine Corps in the public eye and oversaw some of the Marine Corps' most fascinating adventures. The Corps was called out twice in the 1920s to guard the U.S. mail system from armed robbers. It is clear now that by order of the Secretary of the Navy, no information was to be released concerning the guarding of U.S. mail by Marines, yet their story "leaked" and became a national sensation.⁵⁷¹ Lejeune also established a precedent for the Corps' partnership with

⁵⁷¹ Headquarters, U.S. Marine Corps to All Officers of the Recruiting Service, November 9, 1921, Folder: "Publicity," Box 304, Entry 18, Records of the U.S. Marine Corps, General Correspondence, 1913-1938, Record Group 127, National Archives and Records Administration I, Washington, D.C.

Hollywood, a partnership that proved vitally important to the Corps' public image even through the Second World War.

If the First World War acted as the Corps' public relations renaissance, the Second World War was a canvas on which the Corps' leadership could solidify the development over the previous forty years on the Corps' public image. While Brigadier General Robert L. Denig claimed to arrive at the job as head of the Division of Public Relations with no experience, his ability to draw on the Corps' past and prepare for the Corps' participation in the war to come was uncanny. Instead of relying on the outdated methods then employed by all the services, in which protecting and reacting to the news was the norm, Denig sought out experts in the fields of journalism, photography, radio, and motion pictures in order to disseminate and control the Corps' news.

The cadre created by Denig, called the Marine Corps Combat Correspondents, became the most significant factor in the war that helped the Corps stand out above the other services. As the Corps' Combat Correspondents travelled all over the other world to follow the Corps' achievements and the Marines on the ground, their "Joe Blow" stories filtered back to the United States to the hometowns of the families whose sons, brothers, and fathers waited desperately for news. By focusing on the individual Marines' human experience in wartime, the Corps escaped the ubiquitous military and political interest stories often produced by the other services. This not only provided a service for the families and the Marines themselves, but it also helped to make the Marine's wartime experience one in the same with the American experience in general. Without the Corps' Joe Blow stories in the press, and its meticulous attention to getting the name of the

Marines into the public, events such as the flag-raising on Iwo Jima may not have reached as wide an audience as it did.

While the Marine Corps wanted to get its name in front of the public in the Second World War, just as it did in the First World War, Marine public relations leaders still believed that there was a type of recruit that was best suited for the Corps. Through an examination of the Battle of Tarawa and the Corps' release of the film *With the Marines at Tarawa* it is clear that the Corps' establishment of an elite image necessitated a type of recruit that fulfilled its own definitions of manliness and fitness. With the loosening of censorship on images from the battle fronts, the Marine Corps faced a challenge in getting those recruits as parental permission for new seventeen-year-old volunteers collided head on with the disturbing news and images that came from the Battle at Tarawa.

While even the Corps' own recruiters sought to cease the displaying of these images, which showed dead and dying Marines on Pacific beaches, General Denig and the Department of Public Relations came to a different conclusion, one that had far-reaching significance for the Corps' public image. As some recruiters dealt with angry families and a reduction in volunteer numbers because of the scenes in *With the Marines at Tarawa*, Denig and other recruiters found that while those pictures worried the mothers and fathers of potential recruits, the type of Marine recruits that still showed up at the recruiting stations were exactly type of men the Corps sought. The type of men who saw the images of the dead and dying and wanted to join the fight, rather than run away from it.

The Marines that volunteered for the Corps in the aftermath of Tarawa, one of the Corps' bloodiest conflicts, truly embodied the image the Marine Corps had developed for nearly half a century. This was the image of a Marine around which the Corps developed its entire identity. This was the image developed from the news articles that touted its interventions around the world as the purveyors of American democracy throughout the early twentieth century. This was the image that the slogan, "First to Fight," helped the Corps to achieve lower rejection rates during the First World War and, perhaps, led to a higher quality of combat efficiency in Europe. This was the image that Commandant John A. Lejeune helped to legitimize and integrate into American culture during the interwar period. This was the image that the Combat Correspondents disseminated to hometowns across the country during the Second World War.

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